



# Postgraduate Experience Project

Investigating the expectations and attitudes towards  
Postgraduate Taught Science, Technology, Engineering  
and Mathematics (STEM) study at the University of  
Lincoln 2014/2015



**Rachel Spacey and Andrea Abbas**

School of Education

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	4
Rationale and outline of PSS Phase 1 funded by HEFCE .....	4
Introduction to the Postgraduate Experience .....	5
Outline of aims and objectives .....	6
Approach to the research methodology .....	7
Entry to Study survey .....	8
Focus groups .....	8
Additional data collection .....	8
2. Scholarship information .....	11
Key points .....	11
Allocation process and outcomes .....	11
Summary .....	14
3. Entry to study survey .....	15
Key points .....	15
Findings from the Entry to Study Survey .....	15
Section 1 .....	15
Demographics of the sample .....	15
Entry route into PGT study .....	18
Previous study qualifications .....	21
Reasons for undertaking a PGT qualification .....	21
Reasons for choosing a university at which to study a PGT qualification .....	22
Fee levels .....	23
Funding .....	24
Postgraduate Study Expectations – Quality of Study .....	28
Academic feedback .....	32
Current study .....	40
Attitudes towards postgraduate study .....	40
Section 2: Correlations .....	44
Section 3: Significant comparison between groups .....	46
Summary .....	47
4. Exploring the student experience by focus group .....	49
Key points .....	49
Findings from the scholarship and non-scholarship student focus groups .....	52
Summary .....	84
5. Case studies of sustainable good practice to support masters' applicants and students .....	86
Key points .....	86

Case studies .....	86
Case study 1 .....	86
Case study 2 .....	88
Case study 3 .....	91
Summary .....	94
6. Summary, conclusions and recommendations .....	95
Appendices .....	99
References .....	102
Acknowledgments .....	104

## 1. Introduction

### Rationale and outline of PSS Phase 1 funded by HEFCE

The Postgraduate Support Scheme (PSS) supports students progressing to postgraduate taught (PGT) education. It focuses on students who are under-represented at postgraduate (PG) level and in subjects aligned with the Government's growth strategies. For the PSS Phase 1 (2014-15), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) invited proposals for funded projects in the summer of 2013. The interim findings of the projects have informed guidance for the PSS Phase 2 (2015-16). Findings from those reports, along with the programme analyst's report, will inform both Government funding policies and future funding opportunities.

The Postgraduate Experience Project (PEP) is one of 20 projects funded by the HEFCE PSS which is a £25 million publicly-funded programme. The scheme aims to test ways of supporting progression into taught postgraduate education in England. It aims to ensure the continued success of taught postgraduate provision by working with universities and employers to stimulate participation by students who would not otherwise progress to this level. The 20 projects supported more than 2,800 students and involved a range of support activities including financial and pastoral support, mentoring and networking, curricula change, funded studentships, work placements and a variety of bursary and loan schemes.

The PEP is the largest consortium that has been funded by HEFCE and comprises 11 universities (9 English, 1 Welsh and 1 Scottish) that are geographically dispersed across the UK. The collaborative partners include the Universities of Brighton, Coventry, Edinburgh, Kingston, Lincoln, Manchester Metropolitan, Portsmouth, Plymouth, South Wales, Teesside and Wolverhampton. Business and industry leaders and Higher Education (HE) specialists are also involved.

The PEP entitled *“Investigating the expectations and attitudes towards postgraduate taught (PGT) STEM study, and post study outcomes from the perspective of students, universities and employers to support and sustain PGT growth in the UK: A collaborative project”* started in January 2014 and the headline, descriptive findings were reported at a National Dialogical Conference at Kingston University (KU) on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015. This report also focuses on headline and descriptive findings from the statistical data and the focus groups at the University of Lincoln. However, the significance of these findings and the additional qualitative research carried out at the University of Lincoln require lengthier analysis and conceptualisation. These findings are to be reported in later outputs (See *c. Approach to the research methodology – additional data collection*).

## Introduction to the Postgraduate Experience

There are two major issues facing PGT study in the UK. First, although the PGT market has seen a dramatic expansion in the UK in the past 20 years, there has been a recent decline in growth in the overall PGT student numbers, most noticeably amongst UK and Overseas domiciled students (Millward and Creasey, 2013; HESA 2013a,b; Morgan 2013,a,b). The part-time study mode (traditionally dominated by UK domiciled students) and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines have been greatly affected. Although intuitive reasons can be postulated to explain the decrease, there is limited evidence to deduce whether these explanations are sufficiently accurate to enable the development of practical strategies to reverse this pattern. Second, although extensive research has been undertaken in the field of the student experience and learning and teaching at undergraduate level (e.g. Tinto, 1988; Woodrow, 1998; Thomas, 2002; Hatt et al., 2005; Morgan, 2011), there is limited, albeit a growing body of research, in the area of PGT study (Wakeling, 2005; Green, 2005; Stuart et al., 2008). This led to the Higher Education Commission commenting in 2012 that 'Postgraduate education is a forgotten part of the sector' (Higher Education Commission, 2012:17). The available research tends to concentrate on recording and assessing the PGT experience at the end of the course (e.g. the annual PTES Survey by the HEA) rather than understanding motivations, expectations and transitions (e.g. Stuart et al, 2008; Tobell et al., 2008; Morgan and Jones, 2012; Morgan, 2013 b,c). Although the Higher Education Statistics Agency records student data, there is a lack of accurate and detailed retention data available (Millward and Creasey, 2013, Morgan, 2013 a,b). The recent changes in HE, as a result of the White Paper 'Students at the Heart of the System' (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011), and the falling PGT numbers, has made research into identifying factors impacting on participation and successful progression very pressing. The UK Government is committed to expanding PGT study to improve the UK's industrial competitive global position as well as the UK's position in the global market of HE.

Concern has been expressed by a number of organisations about the future of postgraduate education including the Higher Education Commission, the 1994 Group, the National Union of Students and the Sutton Trust, and they have called for further research to be undertaken. Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson's recent report entitled 'Transition to higher degrees across the UK' (Wakeling and Hampden-Thompson, 2013) is the first comprehensive research undertaken examining PG growth within the UK. In their report, they suggest that there are a number of avenues that require further research. These include studying institutional and subject differences, and having a better understanding of student transitions into and out of PGT study. Other valuable research includes that of Steve Machin who has been exploring the financial issues and implications of PG level study for all stakeholders (Machin and Murphy, 2010). However, if HE is to expand and become sustainable through the delivery of high quality teaching, research and knowledge exchange as well as supplying knowledge and skills to industry, professions and students, then any future research undertaken requires the input of a range of stakeholders. Postgraduate study is complex and differs in many respects to undergraduate study so dedicated examination is crucial.

This project draws together these neglected areas of research mentioned above into a coherent investigation. The project is led by Kingston University who has been at the forefront of researching PGT student expectations and their experiences across all disciplines, and specifically STEM subjects through two major HEA funded projects. The first research report published in 2008 and entitled 'Widening participation to postgraduate study: decisions, deterrents and creating success' was led by Professor Mary Stuart with Michelle Morgan being the primary researcher (Stuart et al, 2008). The second report recently published entitled 'Understanding prior feedback experiences of new postgraduate taught (PGT) STEM students' and their expectations and attitudes towards PGT level study at a 1992 institution' was undertaken by Michelle Morgan. This provisional research highlighted key areas that could act as barriers to stimulating PGT participation, progression and success. This large scale pilot project aims to build on those findings and determine their applicability across a range of institutions across England (and the UK) as well as the findings and concerns highlighted in other recent applicable research.

## Outline of aims and objectives

The PEP's overarching aims and objectives have been constructed to maximise our knowledge regarding the participation, progression and success of all new PGT STEM students across the universities involved and with the non-institutional stakeholders. Evidence and knowledge is essential in order to deliver targeted outputs/outcomes that provide practical advice, guidance and initiatives to the institutions involved in the project and beyond, to business and industry, applicants and students. The project aims to provide an understanding of issues within each institution and across the 9 English universities group (9E) as well as a UK perspective as a result of the participation of the other UK universities. This project will provide a template for other institutions wishing to undertake their own comparative research. It will help with informing models for future research into the PGT student body and their experiences. Ultimately, the aim is to undertake practical research to provide practical outcomes that help sustain the PGT market.

The aims and objectives are to:

- Identify the expectations and attitudes of new PGT students and ascertain motivations and drivers for undertaking PGT study;
- Identify employers perception of value, and expectations of the skills a PGT graduate can/should provide business and industry;
- Identify the outcome expectations of obtaining a PGT qualification for the student and employer;
- Identify the financial issues relating to participation and successful progression in PGT study;

- Explore which variables impact on attitudes, expectations the retention of PGT students (e.g. part-time, full-time, domiciled and generational status, age, gender, social class, ethnicity, discipline and route into study such as from work or university);
- Track the retention of the full-time cohort, and the PT and FT scholarship students to identify any barriers to achievement (e.g. level of fees/accrued debt, not coping with the workload or understanding the material);
- Offer a range of fee scholarships to determine if access to different levels of financial support impacts on participation. These students will be tracked 6 months after graduation to identify destinations, outcomes and benefits of their PGT course.
- The diagram below highlights the aims and objectives in the project but for each key stakeholder so it is clear as to the research approach.

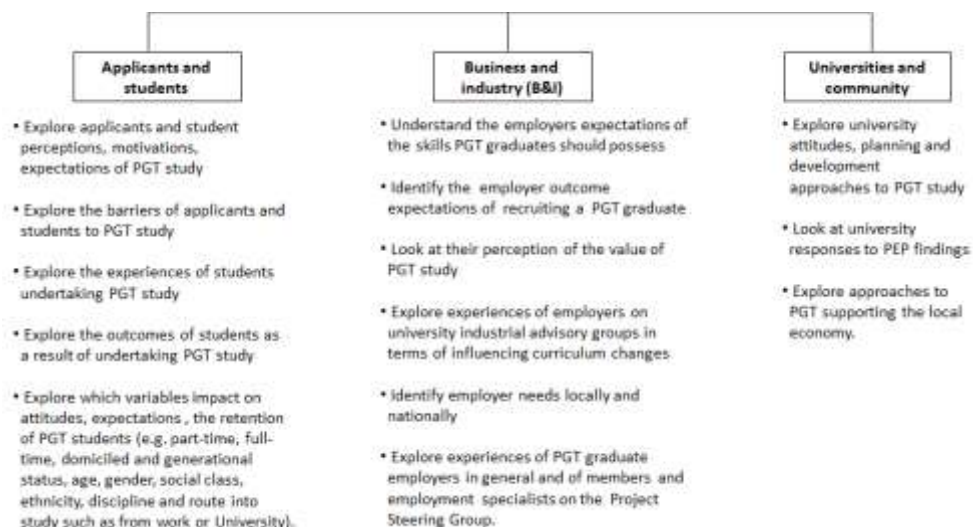


Figure 1 Aims and objectives for each key stakeholder in PEP

## Approach to the research methodology

The data collection explored the expectations, experiences and outcomes of different groups of students via questionnaires, focus groups and focus group questions completed and returned via email. All research ethics considerations were reviewed by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP) Ethics Committee at KU.

### **Entry to Study survey**

All new PGT STEM students were asked to complete the Entry to Study survey (ESS) during the orientation period in September/October 2014. Students were asked to provide their ID when completing the survey but their IDs remained confidential and were only accessible by the research team. The relevant basic findings highlighting any issues expressed by the students were published as a Self-Help sheet in each institution with advice and guidance on where to get support at the start of November. The 9E Group had had 80 £30 Amazon vouchers each to encourage participation. The vouchers were randomly allocated.

Students in receipt of a Project Fee scholarship were required to complete the questionnaire. Their responses were analysed on an institutional level, by each participating university. Each institution's dataset was prepared and sent for analysis under guidance from the Project Research Hub (PRHub) based in CHERP to ensure consistency. The whole data was collated and analysed by the PRHub using SPSS. Descriptive statistics plus a range of appropriate parametric and non-parametric tests were used.

### **Focus groups**

Themes that arose out of the ESS helped the institutional researchers and the project leader generate a semi-structured interview schedule. It was tested on three PGT course representatives at KU to ensure that the questions and prompts used were appropriate. The focus groups were organised and undertaken by the institutional researchers. Different focus groups within each institution were undertaken halfway through the course of the September 2014 cohort. It explored the experiences and expected outcomes of different groups of students based on their funding fee regime. One of the groups consisted of PGT students who have funded their own studies; the other groups comprised students in receipt of a scholarship, each group including participants with the same amount of scholarship. Each non-scholarship participant received a £30 Amazon voucher. Demographics of each participant were noted but their identities kept anonymous. Qualitative approaches were adopted and shared by the institutional researchers to extract meaning from the data in common thematic analysis.

### **Additional data collection**

A number of other surveys were undertaken during the course of the academic year with PEP students and other PGT STEM students. These included a non-completers survey for those who had not completed the ESS, and a range of surveys regarding non-attendance for different groups of prospective PGT STEM students, students undertaking integrated Masters degrees and a finance survey. The data from the University of Lincoln for these surveys was analysed centrally with the other ten institutions and are presented in the final PEP report (See Table 1).



PEP Surveys 2014 -2015	
1. Entry to study survey <i>Non-completers survey</i>	Chapter 3   Institutional Report   University of Lincoln <i>Included in the final PEP report</i>
2. <i>Non-attendance surveys for:</i> a. <i>enquirers</i> b. <i>offered a place but declined</i> c. <i>offered a place, accepted, and then notified that they are not coming</i> d. <i>offered a place, accepted, but did not turn up</i> e. <i>withdrawals</i>	<i>Included in the final PEP report</i>
3. <i>Integrated masters survey</i>	<i>Included in the final PEP report</i>
4. <i>Finance survey</i>	<i>Included in the final PEP report</i>
5. Focus groups	Chapter 4   Institutional Report  University of Lincoln

Table 1 PEP Surveys and Reports

This report presents the institutional findings for the University of Lincoln. The overall findings, from aggregate sample of the 11 participating institutions, are presented in the PEP Final Report.

The team at the University of Lincoln also carried out two additional pieces of research. They carried out more in-depth biographical and education focused interviews with nine case-study students on the programmes half way through the academic year. These are to be followed up with email interviews towards the end of their courses (late 2015) and they will endeavour to follow this group of students into their work environments. The purpose of this research is to get a more in-depth and holistic understanding of the role that the PGT courses play in students' lives and careers. The more longitudinal nature of this aspect of the research means that it will not be reported until December 2015 (the in-depth biographical and follow up interview) and beyond (the interviews after the end of the programme).

In addition, the research team at the University of Lincoln opted to conduct a three hour focus group with programme leaders in which they discussed the results from a preliminary version of this report along with some first impressions from the interviews. This data will also be analysed after this report and will inform later outputs (along with the wider data sets) which will take the form of published academic papers, conference papers and three sets of guidance notes for University of Lincoln:

- Academics running and working on PGT STEM programmes;

- Managers and staff working in central departments;
- Postgraduate students.

## 2. Scholarship information

### Key points

This chapter explores the PEP scholarship allocation process and outcomes at the University of Lincoln.

### Allocation process and outcomes

The Postgraduate Experience Project scholarships were advertised on the University of Lincoln website from June 2014. In addition, Claire Mann, Postgraduate Officer, Communications, Development and Marketing, a member of the PEP Institutional Working Group at the University of Lincoln communicated with potential postgraduates about the scheme. Email contact was made by the Key Link and Institutional Researcher with the relevant course leaders or schools and meetings took place with some of them individually to explain the eligibility and application process so that they might help promote them to potential applicants or applicants they were in contact with who had already been offered and accepted a place but might be eligible to apply.

The eligible STEM MScs identified at the University of Lincoln included:

- MSc Biotechnology
- MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour
- MSc Computer Science
- MSc Forensic Anthropology
- MSc Forensic Science
- MSc Sport Science
- MSc Sustainable Power and Energy Engineering.

The applications to the scheme came in steadily between June 17<sup>th</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 which was the closing date at the University of Lincoln. At the end of August a total of 62 applications had been received. However, not all of these were eligible for inclusion (for example, seven applications were from students applying for the MEng Mechanical Engineering – integrated degrees were not included in the PEP scholarship process). All eligible MScs were encouraged to participate in the PEP STEM scholarship programme. Unfortunately there were no applications from students wishing to study MSc Computer Science or MSc Sustainable Power and Energy Engineering. It later emerged that, for example, the majority of students on the MSc Computer Science who enrolled in 2014-15 were overseas students and were not therefore eligible to apply.

It had been envisaged that employers and significant partners in the region might be able to provide prospective candidates for the PEP scholarships, however, this proved difficult for a variety of reasons including the level of qualifications of employees in the region.

Fifty scholarships were offered of which two were declined and ultimately 48 were allocated (see Table 2). The majority of these were to female students hoping to study on a full time basis. Just two of the scholarship recipients were part time students (one received a full scholarship and the other received a 60% fee scholarship). The smallest scholarship amount should have been £1000 however because the University of Lincoln has a generous discount rate for alumni (30% for former University of Lincoln students and 20% for those from other universities with a 2:1 or above) monies were able to reallocated and distributed and the smallest award increased to £1500 (see Table 3).

The two decliners were both female students hoping to study full time – one awarded £1500 and the other a 60% scholarship. The former was unable to accept her award because of enrolment difficulties whilst the latter could not afford to study in spite of the scholarship:

*"Sorry but my current financial situation... will not allow me to attend. Many thanks for trying, it is greatly appreciated!"*

<i>Scholarship applications</i>	<i>Eligible applications</i>	<i>Non-eligible applications</i>	<i>Scholarship offers made</i>	<i>Scholarships accepted</i>	<i>Scholarships declined</i>
62 (35 F:27 M)	53 (33 F:20 M)	9 (2 F:7 M)	50 (31 F: 19 M)	48 (29 F:19 M)	2 (2 F: 0 M)

**Table 2 PEP Scholarship applications, eligibility and allocations by gender**

	<i>£1500</i>	<i>60%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>Total</i>
Biotechnology	1	7	3	11
Clinical Animal Behaviour	-	9	3	12
Forensic Anthropology	6	5	4	15
Forensic Science	-	-	1	1
Sport Science	2	5	2	9
<i>Total</i>	9	26	13	48

**Table 3 PEP Scholarship awards by course and amount**

The PEP STEM PGT programmes have performed better than other STEM PGT programmes at the University of Lincoln in terms of recruiting Home students. The number of applications to STEM MSc PGT courses at the University of Lincoln has increased from 101 to 169 whilst the number of enrolments has more than tripled from 21 to 80 (see Table 4). It would appear that the number of enrolments is a direct result of the PEP STEM scholarships on some of courses as funding was provided to almost all of the students on some of these courses.

Applications to MSc Biotechnology, MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour and MSc Sport Science for the academic year, 2014-15 all increased when compared to 2013-14 data (from 32 to 51, 49 to 58 and 12 to 18 respectively), as did the number of enrolments (from 4 to 12, 16 to 28 and 0 to 9 respectively) (see Table 5).

Both MSc Forensic Science and MSc Forensic Anthropology are new courses and there is no data available for 2013-14 with which to compare this year's cohort. The costs of these courses have increased since 2013-14 and they are all priced at £6680 whilst the fees for MSc Forensic Anthropology are £7200. Alongside the MSc Forensic Science is an Erasmus Mundus Masters in Forensic Science (19 enrolled this academic year) which makes the latter financially viable.

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>CFUF/UF offers made</i>	<i>Enrolments</i>
2013-14	101	33	21
2014-15	169	85	80

**Table 4 Applications, offers and enrolments for eligible STEM PGT courses**

	2013-14				2014-15			
<i>Course</i>	Applications		Enrolments		Applications		Enrolments	
MSc Biotechnology	32		4		51		12	
	7 H	25 O	3 H	1 O	13 H	38 O	11 H	1 O
MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour	49		16		58		28	
	29 H	20 O	12 H	4 O	40 H	18 O	22 H	6 O
MSc Computer Science	5		0		12		10	
	1 H	4 O	-	-	2 H	10 O	2 H	8 O
MSc Forensic Anthropology	-		-		23		16	
	-	-	-	-	19 H	4 O	15 H	1 O
MSc Forensic Science	-		-		6		4	
	-	-	-	-	4 H	2 O	3 H	1 O

MSc Sport Science	12		0		18		9	
	5 H	7 O	-	-	15 H	3 O	9 H	0 O
MSc Sustainable Power and Energy Engineering	3		1		1		1	
	3 H	0 O	1 H	0 O	1 H	0 O	0 H	1 O

**Table 5 STEM PGT applications and enrolments 2013-14/2014-15**

## Summary

The PGT STEM programmes that had fees scholarships funded by PEP attracted more home students than other eligible PGT STEM programmes at the University of Lincoln.

The PEP funding was important to the University of Lincoln's aspirations to grow STEM and contribute to the local economy. As the University of Lincoln is a relatively new university that has only just begun to grow STEM Masters programmes the aim was to support the growth of a batch of new or relatively new programmes. This was successful in that programmes that would not have run were supported to develop and grow and other programmes which were struggling to attract students had significantly larger cohorts than otherwise expected.

As the programmes are recruiting rather than selective it was not possible to target groups with low participation rates: it was more important to ensure that programmes recruited sufficient students. However, the PEP funding did facilitate a wider range of students to engage so it may have contributed to this agenda. The University of Lincoln is keen to encourage diverse participation but is restricted in some ways by the demographic make-up of the region.

### 3. Entry to study survey

#### Key points

This chapter explores the findings of the ESS at the University of Lincoln. Section 1 presents the frequencies for each of the questions in the survey and describes the sample and their responses. This sample is mainly UK domiciled, White British and female. Section 2 considers Phase II of the analysis which explored correlations between ordinal variables where there are response scales using Spearman's rho. They considered anxiety, expectations of PGT study and learning strengths and weaknesses. Section 3 details the findings of Phase III of the data analysis which involved analysis and comparisons between groups.

A total of 53 students completed the ESS the majority of which, 48, were in receipt of a PEP scholarship (90.6%) whilst five students were not. This was from a potential sample of 80 representing a response rate of 66.3%.

#### Findings from the Entry to Study Survey<sup>1</sup>

##### Section 1

##### Demographics of the sample

Respondents to the ESS were enrolled to study on one of five Masters' courses at the University of Lincoln (Fig. 2) and were based across three Schools (Fig. 3). Whilst there was a reasonable spread of responses across four of the programmes, the sample was over-focused on the School of Life Sciences.

---

<sup>1</sup> The frequencies for the entire data set (53) are presented rather than differentiating between the PEP scholarship students (48) and the non-PEP students (5) as the latter group is so small. This section reports the findings from the ESS and begins by providing basic demographic data for the sample.

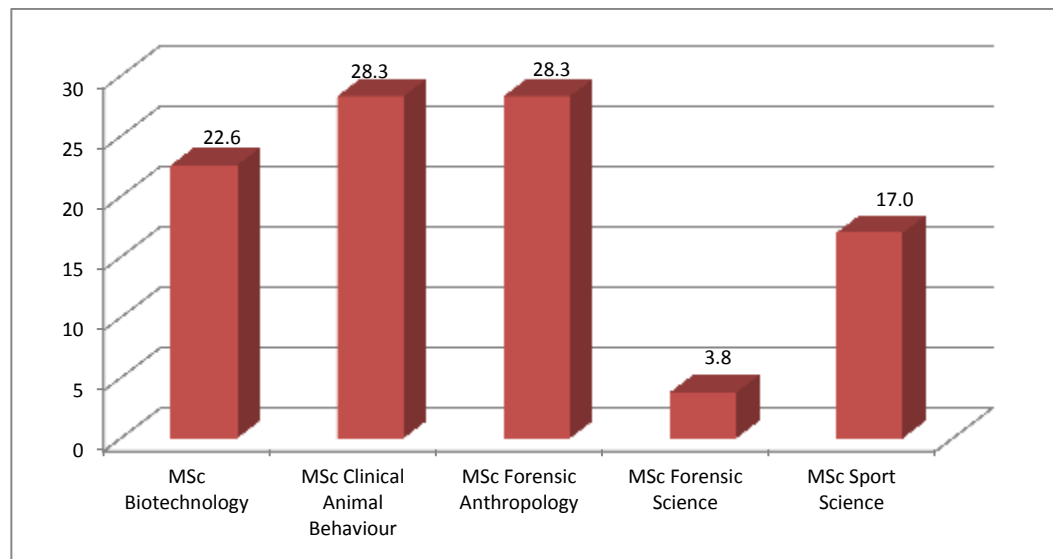


Figure 2 Survey respondents by course

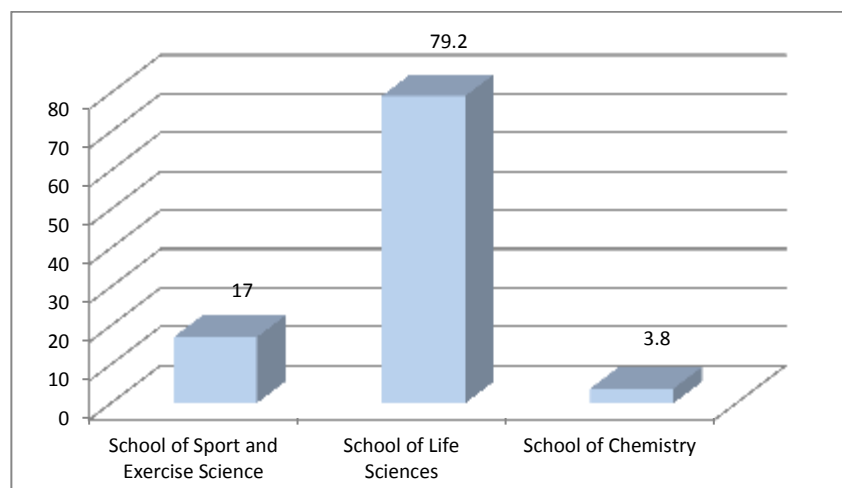


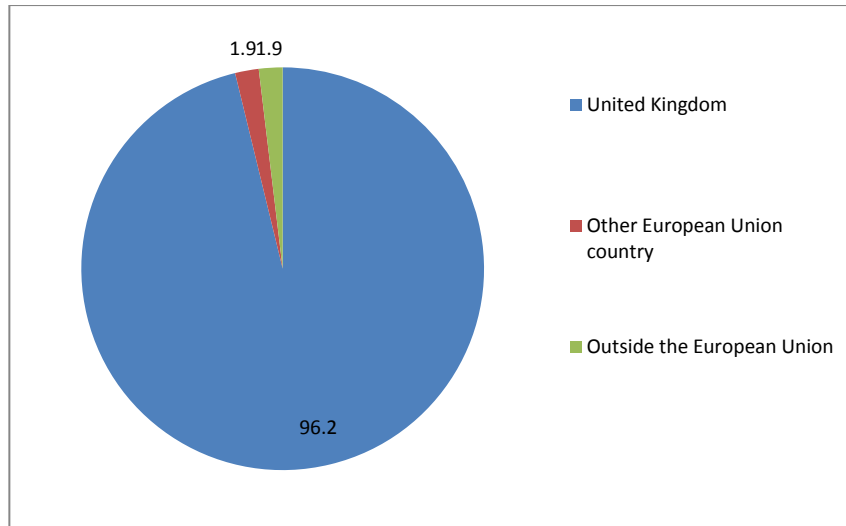
Figure 3 Survey respondents by School

The PEP deliberately set out to explore the experience of UK domiciled students and in this respect our survey is strong but the ethnic diversity of the UK population is not reflected in this group<sup>2</sup>. However, the ethnic profile for the University of Lincoln, like the survey, is overwhelmingly White British. The majority of respondents were UK domiciled (96.2%) while one respondent permanently resides in another European Union country and one resides outside the European Union (Fig. 4). Approximately 90% of respondents were English (n=48) with the remaining students of Scottish (n=2), Welsh (n=1), Portuguese (n=1) and Qatari (n=1) nationality. The majority of the respondents classified themselves as White (98.1%) whilst 1.9% classified as Other (n=1). All but two respondents consider English their first language (96.2%, n=51). This data does not allow

<sup>2</sup> According to data from the Office of National Statistics, the majority of the usual UK resident population, 86.0 per cent of the population, reported their ethnic group as White in the 2011 Census. Indian was the next largest ethnic group with 2.5 per cent followed by Pakistani (2.0 per cent). The remaining ethnic groups each accounted for up to 2 per cent of the 2011 population (ONS, 2012).



us to bring out what is significant about home students' experience of STEM masters at the University of Lincoln in comparison to non-White ethnic groups. The concentration of White British students may be an impact of the PEP scholarships since they were only available to UK domiciled students. In addition, these particular programmes may be less likely to attract to non-White ethnic students from the UK.



**Figure 4 Domiciled status**

The data on living arrangements coincides with the participants' largely coming straight from undergraduate degrees. Like many students or young professionals they tend to live alone, share or live with friends or they live with parents (77.3% overall) (Fig. 5). Hence most respondents pick accommodation that is near the university and travel less than five miles to the University of Lincoln (62.3%, n=33). Although 17.0% (n= 9) travel more than 35 miles. Over half of respondents reside in rented accommodation (52.8%, n=28) while 14 live in their own accommodation (26.4%) and 11 live in university accommodation (20.8%). Almost three quarters of respondents are single having never married (71.7%, n=38), nine live with a partner (17.0%), four are married (7.5%) and two are divorced/separated (3.8%). For those with a spouse or partner, the majority of partners are in paid employment (56.3%, n=9) while 31.3% are in full time education (n=5). Four respondents have children under the age of 16. The sample is dominated by young students, coming straight from their undergraduate degrees living in rented and university accommodation.

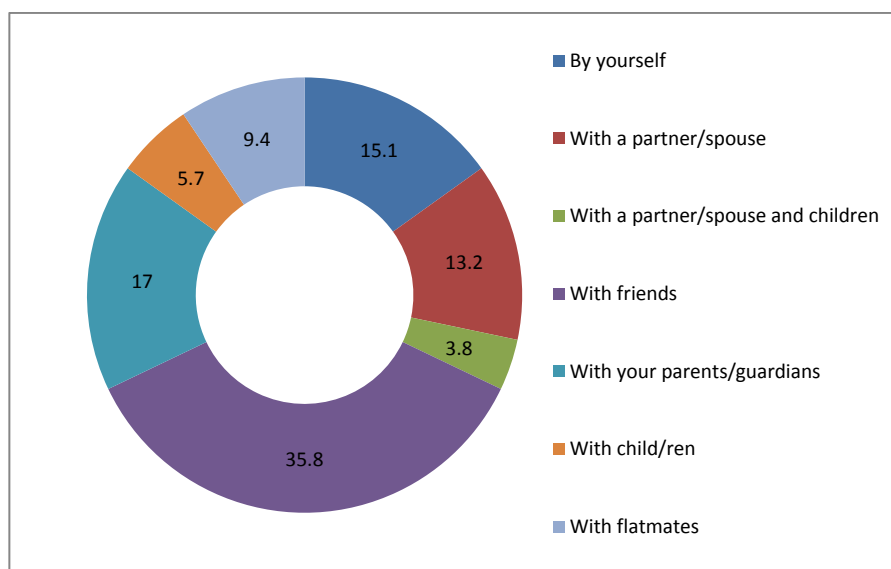


Figure 5 Living arrangements

### Entry route into PGT study

The majority of respondents had come straight from university with 33 respondents having achieved their highest previous qualification in 2014 (62.3%) (Fig.6). Approximately a quarter of respondents had come straight from work (24.5%) whilst 13.2% described other situations prior to entry such as study or training, unemployment or caring responsibilities (Fig.7) .

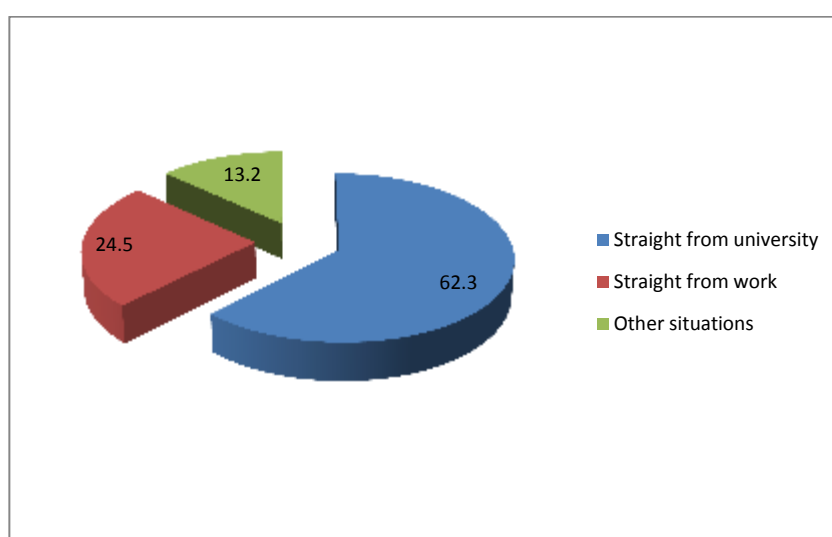
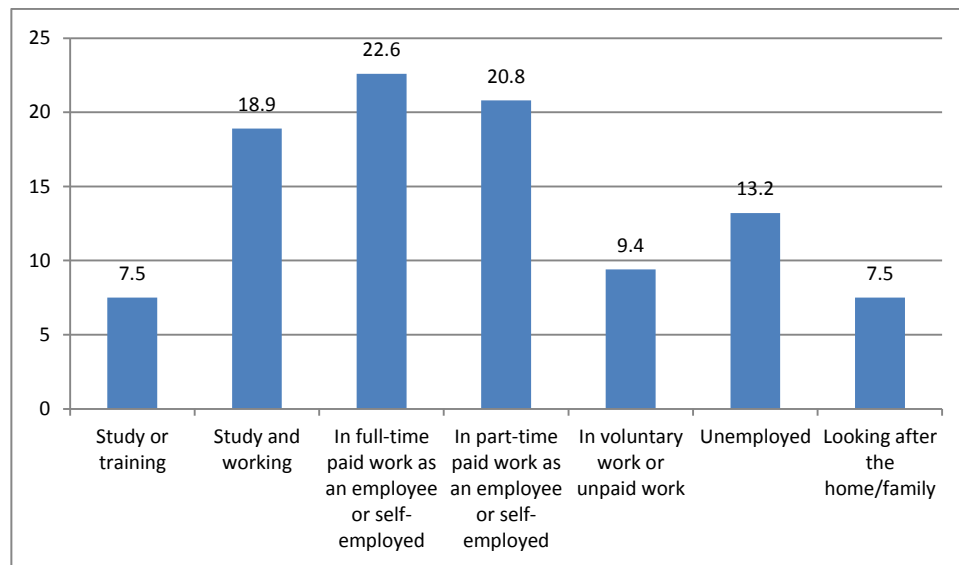


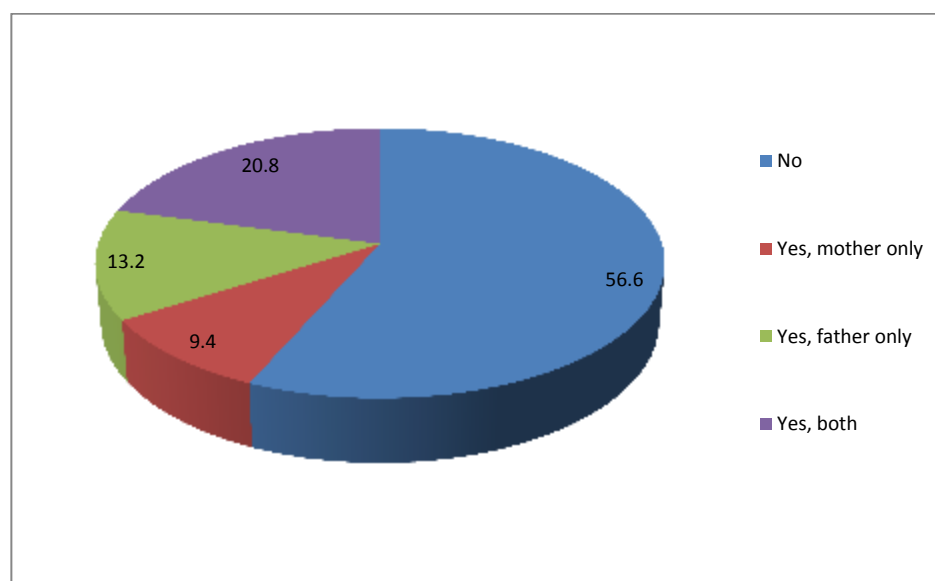
Figure 6 Route into study



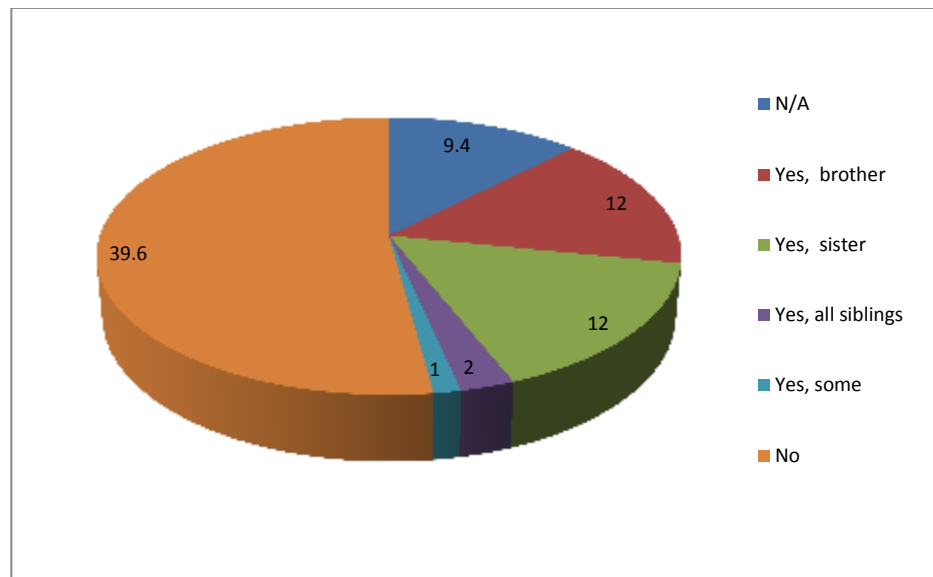
**Figure 7 Entry route into PGT study**

This raises questions about whether those in work are under-represented on these courses. Even though scholarships were advertised it would only be those people who even thought that a taught postgraduate degree was in their reaches that are likely to have seen the advertisements.

The PEP had an over-representation of students who were first generation students. Neither of the parents of thirty respondents had been to university (56.6%) whilst 23 were second generation (their father or mother or both of their parents had attended university – 43.4% in total) (Fig. 8). Of those with siblings (48) over half had attended university (56.3%, n=27) (Fig.9). This is interesting when we consider that in Stuart et al's study, they found that first generation students were less likely to seek postgraduate qualifications (Stuart et al, 2008).

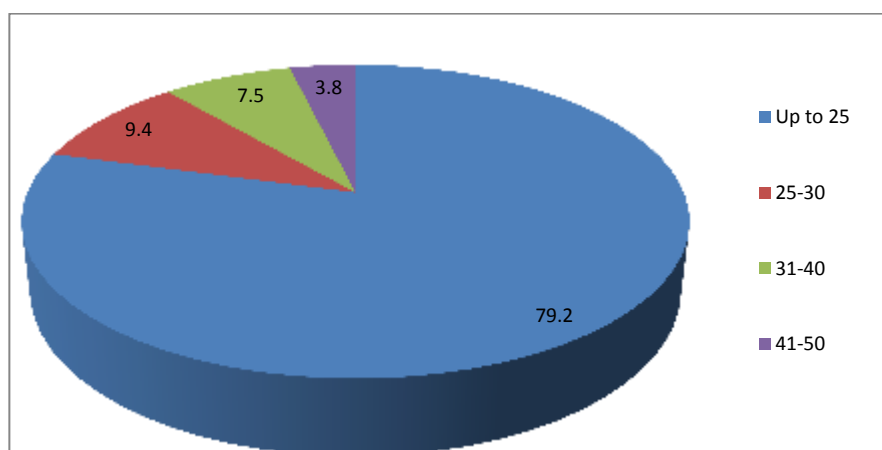


**Figure 8 Generational Status**



**Figure 9 Siblings attended university**

It is likely that the disciplines studied (life-sciences attract greater numbers of female students<sup>3</sup>) and the success of girls which leads to them being generally over-represented compared to boys<sup>4</sup>. Of the respondents 64.0% were female (n=34) and 36.0% were male (n=19). The majority of respondents were in the under 25 age group (79.2%). The smallest group were the 41-50 age group (3.8%) (Fig. 10). The small number of older students reflects national trends around participation generally but particularly in relation to postgraduate study of STEM subjects.



**Figure 10 Respondents within each age group**

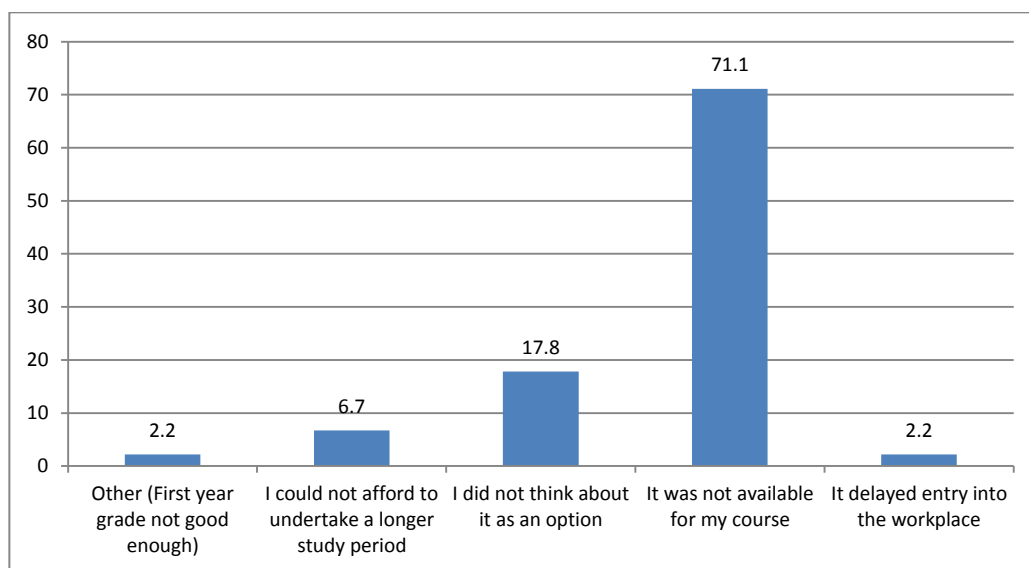
<sup>3</sup> According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2015), in 2013/14 subject areas with a high proportion of females include subjects allied to medicine (79.5%), veterinary science (76.1%) and education (76.0%) whilst those with a low proportion of females include computer science (17.1%) and engineering & technology (16.1%).

<sup>4</sup> In 2013/14 there were 1,289,090 female students (including full and part time; undergraduate and postgraduates enrolled) compared to 1,010,035 male students (HESA, 2015). At the University of Lincoln, the student make up is 59% female, 41% male (The Complete University Guide, 2015).

### Previous study qualifications

Many students were local to Lincoln at least in the sense that they had done their undergraduate courses at the University of Lincoln. Respondents had a wide range of previous qualifications on entry to their postgraduate course, the majority in possession of a BSc (Hons) (81.1%) and/or A levels (62.3%). A small number had already obtained a master's level qualification or higher (9.4%). Most respondents had completed their highest qualification in the same year they began their master's qualification - 2014 (62.3%).

Nearly all of the respondents had undertaken their highest previous qualification in the UK (96.1%, n=49) and almost two-thirds of respondents had undertaken their previous qualification at the University of Lincoln (64.7%, n=33). Just 8.0% of those who had obtained an undergraduate degree or postgraduate qualification, had completed a sandwich/placement/internship period (n=4). For three-quarters of this group this had been of a 5-10 weeks duration (n=3) and less than five weeks for one respondent. Most of those who had undertaken this kind of course did so because they thought it would “*benefit my future employment*” (n=3). For those who did not take a course with a sandwich/placement/internship period, overwhelmingly this was because it wasn't available for their course (71.1%) (Fig. 11). This may then be a motivation to undertake a Master's degree and gain some relevant work experience.



**Figure 11 Reasons why respondents did not take a course with a sandwich/placement/internship**

### Reasons for undertaking a PGT qualification

Respondents were asked to cite their top three reasons for undertaking a PGT qualification. Respondents were given 23 options from which to select including an 'other' category. The majority of respondents were interested in the subject (77.4%, n=41);

wanted to develop a more specialist set of skills and knowledge (75.5%, n=40) and because PGT study felt like a natural step (71.7%, n=38).

<i>Primary reason</i>	<i>% (no.)</i>
It is a requirement to enter my chosen profession	39.6% (21)
To develop my professional networks	45.3 (24)
It is a requirement of my current job	1.9 (1)
To progress in my current career	20.8 (11)
To improve my employment prospects	
I had been unable to find a suitable job	7.5 (4)
I wanted to postpone job hunting	-
To enable me to progress to a higher level qualification (e.g. PhD)	47.2 (25)
I want a career in higher education (e.g. researcher or teaching career)	22.6 (12)
To gain exposure to the research environment	30.2 (16)
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor	18.9 (10)
I was encouraged by an employer	-
To prove I was capable of postgraduate study	17.0 (9)
The funding was available	11.3 (6)
I was interested in the subject	77.4 (41)
It felt like a natural step for me	71.7 (38)
My family expect me to undertake further study	1.9 (1)
To develop a broader range of skills and knowledge	43.4 (23)
To develop a more specialist set of skills and knowledge	75.5 (40)
I had enjoyed my previous higher education studies	45.3 (24)
I want to continue studying	54.7 (29)
<i>Total</i>	100.0 (53)

**Table 6 Reasons for undertaking PGT level study**

### **Reasons for choosing a university at which to study a PGT qualification**

Respondents were asked to state what had been important to them when choosing a university to undertake a PGT degree (see Table 7). For this group, from a choice of 23 options including 'other', by far the most popular reason was 'I have studied at the institution before' with 30.2% (n=16). The second reason with 23.5% was 'course content' (n=12) and joint third with 13.7% was 'I felt inspired to work with a particular academic' and 'there are opportunities for international collaboration' (n=7).

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Reason 1 % (no.)</i>	<i>Reason 2 % (no.)</i>	<i>Reason 3 % (no.)</i>
Overall reputation of the institution	9.4 (5)	-	5.9 (3)
Reputation in chosen subject area	18.9 (10)	11.8 (6)	3.9 (2)
Reputation of department	7.5 (4)	5.9 (3)	3.9 (2)
Location of institution	9.4 (5)	9.8 (5)	3.9 (2)
I have studied at the institution before	30.2 (16)	7.8 (4)	5.9 (3)
It is the only institution offering this programme	-	-	-
It was recommended to me	1.9 (1)	-	5.9 (3)
My employer advised or encouraged me to do it	-	-	-
Delivery of the programme is flexible enough to fit around my life	1.9 (1)	2.0 (1)	2.0 (1)
Funding was available to study this particular programme	-	3.9 (2)	3.9 (2)
The cost of the programme was lower compared to other institutions	-	13.7 (7)	2.0 (1)
The cost of the programme was higher compared to other institutions	-	-	-
Graduates from this institution have a good career and employment prospects	1.9 (1)	-	3.9 (2)
Course content	11.3 (6)	23.5 (12)	11.8 (6)
Good teaching methods	-	2.0 (1)	5.9 (3)
The way the programme is assessed	1.9 (1)	2.0 (1)	
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	3.8 (2)	7.8 (4)	13.7 (7)
There were opportunities for work placements/working with employers	-	-	-
There are opportunities for international collaboration/fieldwork opportunities	-	5.9 (3)	13.7 (7)
Reputation for good social life	-	-	2.0 (1)
Institutional facilities	1.9 (1)	3.9 (2)	9.8 (5)
Other	-	-	2.0 (1)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 (53)</i>	<i>100.0 (51)</i>	<i>100.0 (51)</i>

Table 7 Top three reasons when choosing a university for PGT study

### Fee levels

Almost all the respondents were classed as Home in relation to fee status (96.2%, n=51) whilst one was non-EU and one, Other EU. Respondents were asked to state how important the levels of fees were in their decision making process (Fig. 12). Of the sample, 37.7% (n=20) stated that the fee levels were 'very important' whilst for 34.0% they were 'important' (n=18). Almost a quarter of respondents felt that fee levels were 'slightly important' (n=13 or 24.5%) and just two respondents felt that they were 'not important at all' (3.8%). Interestingly, this view was contradicted by focus group participants where the importance of the funding was highlighted by most students.

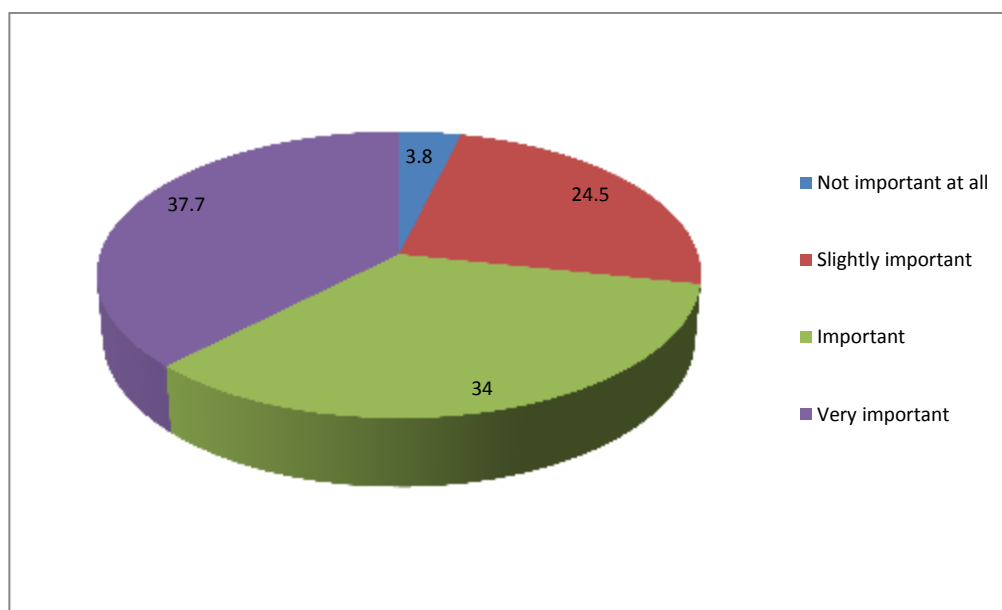


Figure 12 Importance of fee levels in making postgraduate choice

The majority of respondents found out about sources of funding available for their course through the University of Lincoln (66.0%, n=35) and by looking online (56.6%, n=30) (Fig.13).

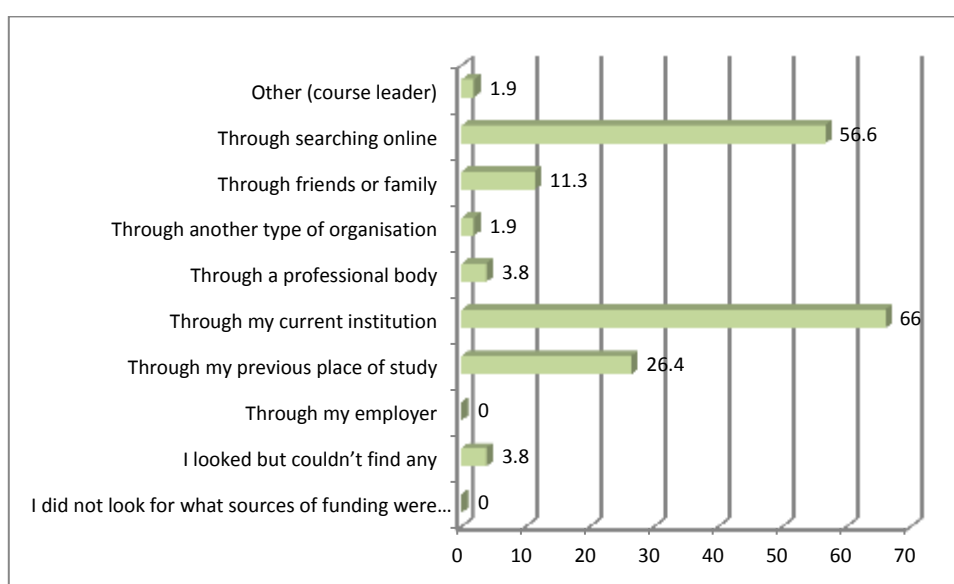


Figure 13 Sources of funding information

## Funding

The respondents were asked about the main source of funding for their PGT study (i.e. fees and living costs). As anticipated, scholarships were an important source of funding since 48 of the respondents were in receipt of a scholarship as part of this project. In total, 54.7% of respondents were reliant on a scholarship of some kind as their main



source of funding (n=29). Savings were an important source of funding with 28.3% of respondents citing this as their main source of funding (n=15) whilst 24.5% of the sample were reliant on monies from their parent or guardian (n=13) (Table 8).

<i>Methods of funding</i>	<i>No. of respondents % (no.)</i>
Overdraft	-
Loan	17.0 (9)
Other unsecured debt (e.g. credit card, payday lender)	-
Salary or personal income	11.3 (6)
Savings	28.3 (15)
Funded by parents/guardians	24.5 (13)
Funded by spouse/partner	1.9 (1)
Funded by friends/associates	-
University scholarship/studentship	34.0 (18)
HEFCE Project Scholarship	5.7 (3)
Research Council Studentship (e.g. ESRC, EPSRC, AHRC)	1.9 (1)
Employer sponsorship	1.9 (1)
UK government sponsorship	-
EU government sponsorship	-
Overseas government sponsorship	1.9 (1)
Highly Skilled Workforce scholarship	-
Other (PEP STEM scholarship)	9.4 (5)
Other (Disability benefits PIP)	1.9 (1)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 (53)</i>

**Table 8 Main source of funding for PGT study**

Consideration of sources of funding for firstly, fees and secondly, living costs highlighted some differences (Tables 9 and 10). The top three methods of funding for fees are firstly, scholarship (83.0%). Savings were the second source (35.8%) and parents (32.1%) the third. Funding for living costs was primarily funded by parents (49.15), salary or personal income (45.3%) and savings (37.7%). Overall it indicates a struggle and sacrifices made in order to study at PGT level.

<i>Methods of funding</i>	<i>No. of respondents % (no.)</i>
University scholarship/studentship	54.7 (29)
Savings	35.8 (19)
Funded by parents/guardians	32.1 (17)
Loan	18.9 (10)
Other (PEP STEM scholarship)	11.3 (6)
HEFCE Project Scholarship	7.5 (4)
Salary or personal income	9.4 (5)
Other unsecured debt (e.g. credit card, payday lender)	1.9 (1)
Other (PEP STEM scholarship and University alumni discount)	1.9 (1)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 (53)</i>

Table 9 Main methods of funding fees

<i>Methods of funding</i>	<i>No. of respondents % (no.)</i>
Funded by parents/guardians	49.1 (26)
Salary or personal income	45.3 (24)
Savings	37.7 (20)
Loan	22.6 (12)
Overdraft	5.7 (3)
Funded by spouse/partner	5.7 (3)
Overseas government sponsorship	1.9 (1)
Other unsecured debt (e.g. credit card, payday lender)	1.9 (1)
Other (Disability benefits – PIP)	1.9 (1)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 (53)</i>

Table 10 Main methods of funding living costs

When asked if they would be undertaking paid work during their postgraduate studies almost half of respondents thought that they would be working part time short hours (less than 20 hours per week) whilst approximately a third were not sure (30.2%, n=16) (Fig. 14).

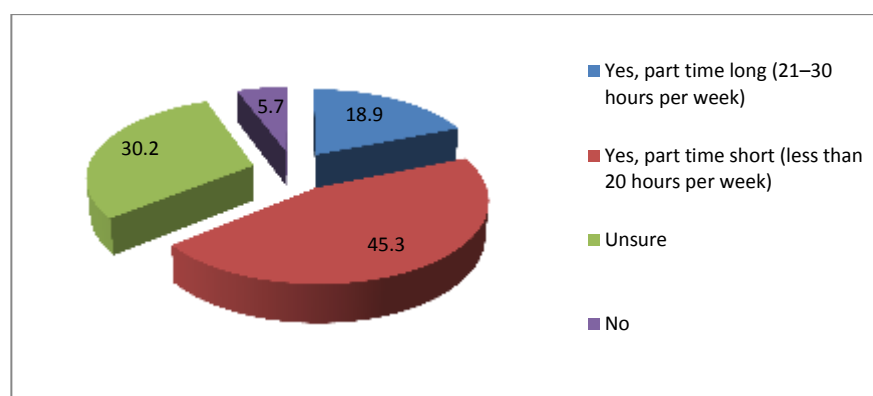


Figure 14 Intentions to undertake paid work whilst studying

For most respondents, the way they were funding their course did affect their decision about whether they studied full or part time (88.7%, n=47). When this was explored, over half of respondents had decided to study full time (58.5%, n=31). It had affected the decision about what institution to attend for 17% of respondents (n=9) whilst 13.2% had decided to study locally and live with their family (n=7) (Fig. 15).

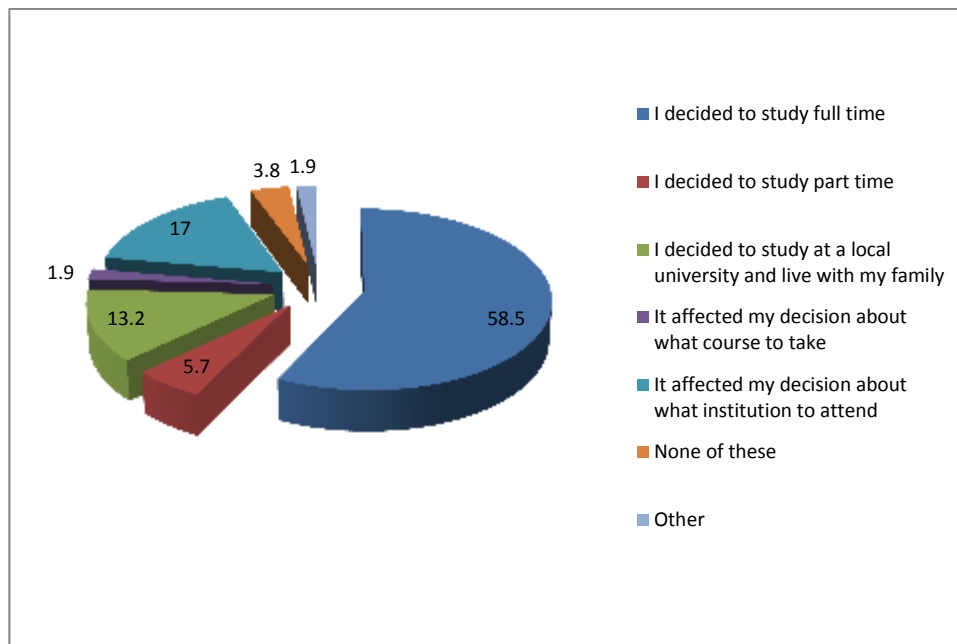


Figure 15 How did funding for your course affect how you study?

Over eighty per cent of respondents had an outstanding student loan or debt (n=47). This may suggest that students who choose to study a PGT qualification accept the debt as worthwhile. For 38.3% of those with debt this was between twenty and twenty-five thousand pounds (n=18) whilst ten respondents preferred not to disclose the size of their debt (Fig. 16). Interestingly, it only affected the choices made in relation to PGT study for 14.9% of respondents (n=7).

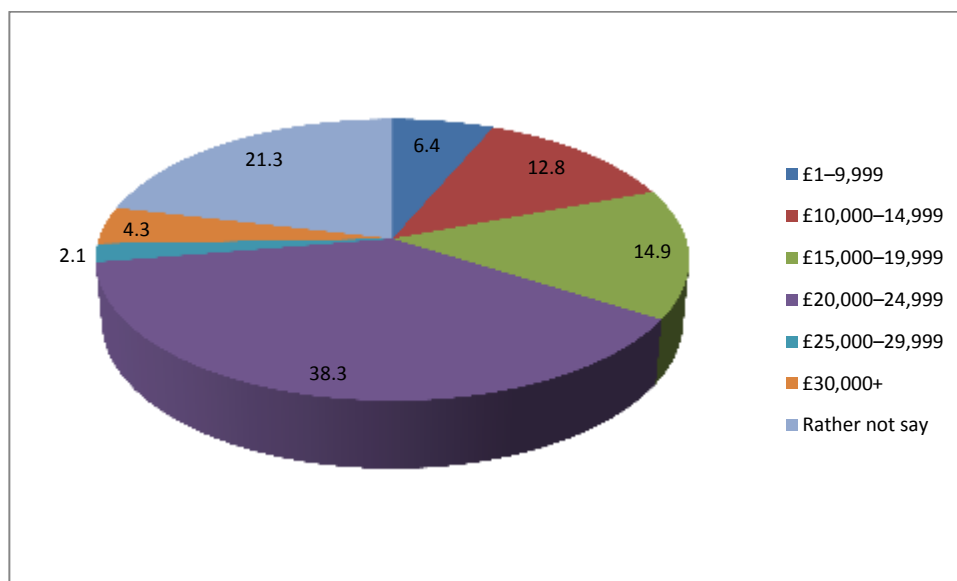


Figure 16 Size of outstanding student debt

### Postgraduate Study Expectations – Quality of Study

Respondents were asked to consider what they were hoping their postgraduate study would do. Interestingly, the majority thought they would specialise their knowledge (56.6%, n= 30) whilst 37.7% hoped to widen their knowledge (n=20). A very small proportion thought that postgraduate study would provide more applied/vocational study (n=2) or more theoretical knowledge (n=1).

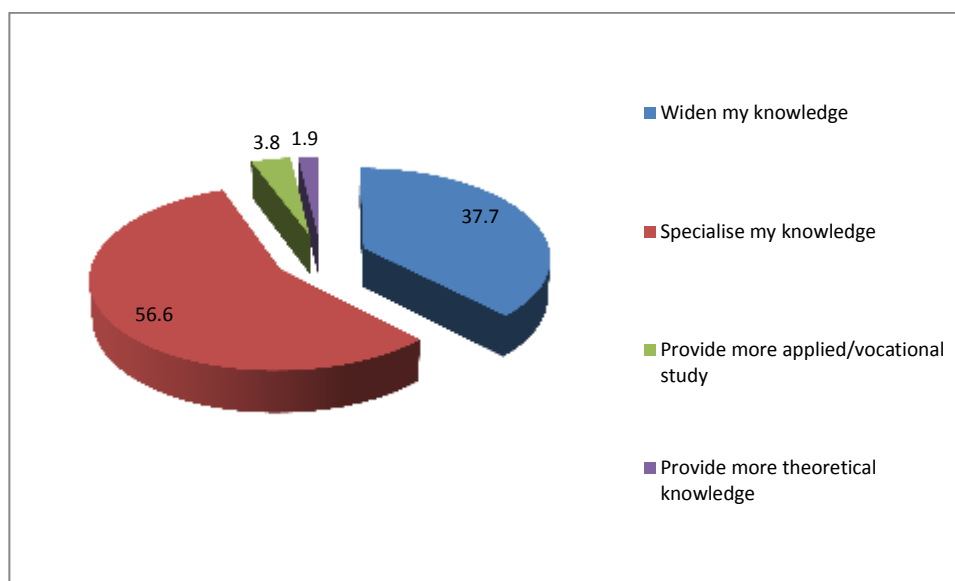


Figure 17 Hopes of postgraduate study

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they 'agreed' or 'disagreed' with a range of statements to determine whether they viewed postgraduate study differently to undergraduate study. In the following table the 'definitely agree' and 'agree' responses have been combined (Table 6). Of the sample, 98.1% agreed or definitely agreed that postgraduate level study requires more independent study than at undergraduate level (n=52).

Statements	No. of respondents % (no.)
Postgraduate level study requires more independent study than at undergraduate level	98.1 (52)
I expect more value for money at postgraduate level than at undergraduate level	73.6 (39)
Postgraduate level should provide a more personalised study experience for the student than at undergraduate level	88.7 (47)
I do not know what to expect when studying at postgraduate level	32.7 (17)

Table 11 Postgraduate study expectations

Dominant concerns appear to be coping with the level of study required at this level (58.5% overall and the top three concern – 34.9%) (Table 12). Concerns about growing debt were also high (26.4% overall and the top third concern).

<i>Concerns</i>	<i>Overall % (no.)</i>	<i>First % (no.)</i>	<i>Second % (no.)</i>	<i>Third % (no.)</i>
<b>Practical concerns and difficulties</b>				
Difficulties in fitting the course around my existing work commitments	26.4 (14)	9.3 (4)	11.4 (4)	-
Having a long commute to attend the course	15.1 (8)	4.7 (2)	5.7 (2)	3.7 (1)
Difficulties in fitting the course around family commitments	9.4 (5)	2.3 (1)	8.6 (3)	-
Lack of suitable childcare	3.8 (2)	2.3 (1)	-	-
Lack of support/encouragement from my family and friends	3.8 (2)	-	-	3.7 (1)
Getting used to living in a new country	1.9 (1)	2.3 (1)	-	-
Lack of support/encouragement from my employer	1.9 (1)	-	-	3.7 (1)
<b>Financial concerns and difficulties</b>				
Concerns about increasing my existing levels of debt	26.4 (14)	7.0 (3)	11.4 (4)	25.9 (7)
Concerns about getting into debt	20.8 (11)	4.7 (2)	8.6 (3)	-
Lack of sufficient funding	18.9 (10)	7.0 (3)	11.4 (4)	3.7 (1)
Lack of information about funding support	11.3 (6)	2.3 (1)	5.7 (2)	-
Difficulties in getting the information I need to calculate my study costs	5.7 (3)	2.3 (1)	2.9 (1)	-
Lack of affordable childcare	3.8 (2)	2.3 (1)	-	-
<b>Study concerns and difficulties</b>				
Coping with the level of study required at this level	58.5 (31)	34.9 (15)	8.6 (3)	14.8 (4)
Lack of confidence about my ability to study	24.5 (13)	9.3 (4)	5.7 (2)	18.5 (5)
Getting on with fellow students	15.1 (8)	-	2.9 (1)	11.1 (3)
Concerns about committing more time to study	15.1 (8)	2.3 (1)	8.6 (3)	7.4 (2)
Fitting in with the university culture	9.4 (5)	-	2.9 (1)	-
Other	3.8 (2)	-	-	-
Lack of information about study opportunities	1.9 (1)	-	-	-
Complex course application process	1.9 (1)	-	-	-
Unsure if the course is right for me	1.9 (1)	-	-	-
None of the above	-	7.0 (3)	5.7 (2)	7.4 (2)
<i>Total</i>		100.0 (43)	100.0 (35)	100.0 (27)

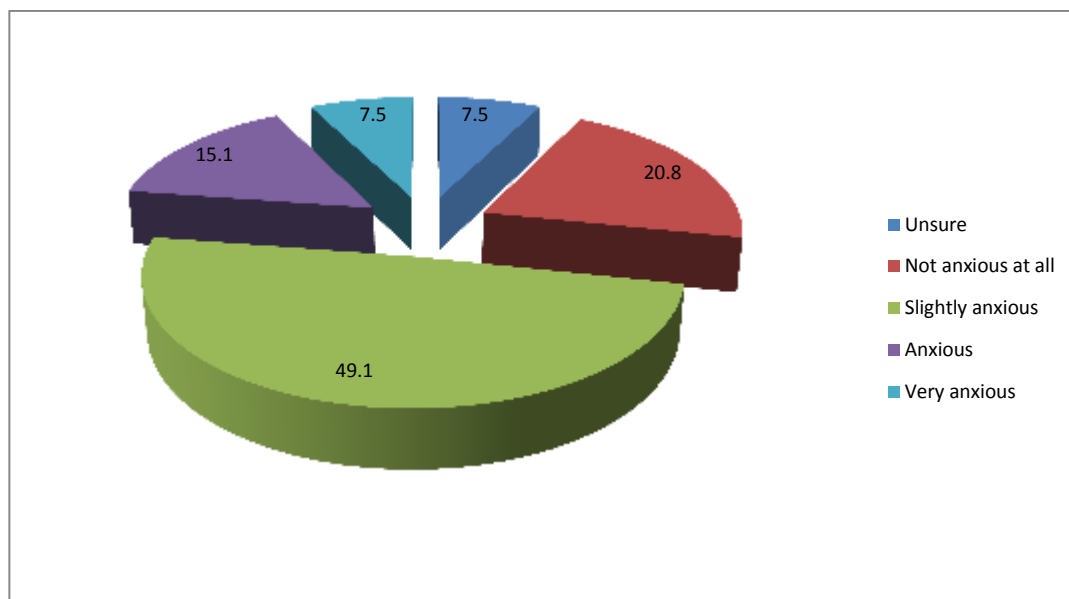
Table 12 Concerns about PGT study

Respondents were asked to consider how confident they were about a number of factors when starting their course (Table 13). The majority were 'confident' about coping with the standard of work (54.7%, n=29), about getting involved in university life (56.6%, n=30), making friends (56.6%, n=30), managing their money (58.5%, n=31) and looking after their health and welfare (50.9%, n=27). Although these are large proportions they do leave just under half of students feeling less confident and they are perhaps in need of support.

Large proportions were also 'very confident' in relation to looking for suitable accommodation (45.3%, n=24) and coping with the travelling to university (35.8%, n=19). The largest percentage of respondents expressing lack of confidence were in relation to coping with balancing the demands of life and study (30.2%, n=16 'not confident') and managing their money (11.3%, n=6 'not confident at all').

	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Not confident at all</i>	<i>Not confident</i>	<i>Unsure</i>	<i>Confident</i>	<i>Very confident</i>	<i>Total</i>
Coping with the standard of work	-	1.9 (1)	22.6 (12)	11.3 (6)	54.7 (29)	9.4 (5)	100.0 (53)
Getting involved in university life	-	3.8 (2)	9.4 (5)	1.9 (1)	56.6 (30)	28.3 (15)	100.0 (53)
Making friends	-	1.9 (1)	15.1 (8)	3.8 (2)	56.6 (30)	22.6 (12)	100.0 (53)
Managing my money	-	11.3 (6)	17.0 (9)	3.8 (2)	58.5 (31)	9.4 (5)	100.0 (53)
Looking for suitable accommodation	32.1 (17)	1.9 (1)	1.9 (1)	-	18.9 (10)	45.3 (24)	100.0 (53)
Looking after my health and welfare	-	1.9 (1)	9.4 (5)	3.8 (2)	50.9 (27)	34.0 (18)	100.0 (53)
Coping with the travelling to university	13.2 (7)	-	7.5 (4)	-	43.4 (23)	35.8 (19)	100.0 (53)
Coping with balancing life demands and study	-	5.7 (3)	30.2 (16)	7.5 (4)	47.2 (25)	9.4 (5)	100.0 (53)

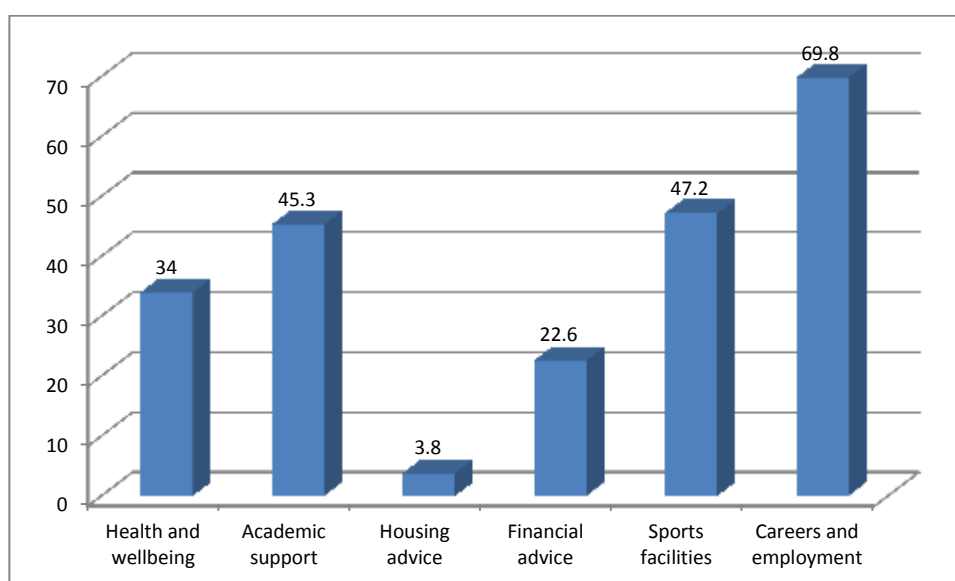
Table 13 Confidence in relation to a number of factors at the beginning of the course



**Figure 18 Anxiety about PGT study**

When asked to think about their concerns, respondents reflected on their anxiety levels (Fig. 18). Almost half of respondents were slightly anxious (49.1%, n=26) whilst approximately a fifth were either anxious or very anxious (22.6%, n=12).

In terms of students' expectations about the University of Lincoln services they will use (Fig. 19), most respondents expect that they will use the Careers and Employment service whilst on their course (69.8%, n=37) which perhaps relates to the fact that most of them hope to secure employment once they have completed their course. Recreational sports facilities are a popular choice (47.2%, n=45) while almost half anticipate using some form of academic support service whilst a PG (45.3%, n=24).



**Figure 19 University support services PGs think they might use**

Respondents were asked if they had an expectation of how to study at postgraduate level of which the majority of respondents said they did (73.6%, n=39) compared to 26.4% (n=14) who said they did not. Respondents were then asked if they intended to change their learning behaviour and how. Analysis of these comments reveals that students perceived these changes in relation to how they managed their time; autonomous learning and their interactions with teachers and peers. For example, they wrote about spending more time on their studies, being more organised and putting more effort in:

*“I intend to put a lot more effort in to my studies and utilise the lecturers to help with any concerns or queries I may have”.*

Some respondents felt that their learning would be a lot more independent:

*“I think there will be a heavy amount of self-directed learning”*

*“More independent work”.*

Students’ perceived there would be more discussion and debate with others, more group work and more interaction with academic staff:

*“Also getting involved with other students to support each other and get a better understanding of the material taught together would probably be needed. So more group work”.*

### **Academic feedback**

This section included questions which explored students’ prior academic experience as a means to explore their current preferences, insights and expectations in relation to their PGT study. Respondents were asked how they typically received feedback for the work they submitted during previous study experiences (Fig. 20). The majority of students received feedback on a hard copy version of their assignment (94.3%) whilst just under half received feedback electronically via Turnitin (47.2%). However, when asked which feedback method they preferred for assessed work, written feedback (hard copy) and face to face with tutor individually were the clear favourites (41.5% and 39.6% respectively) (Fig. 21). Interestingly, electronic feedback is not particularly favoured when this appears to be the popular trend in HE.



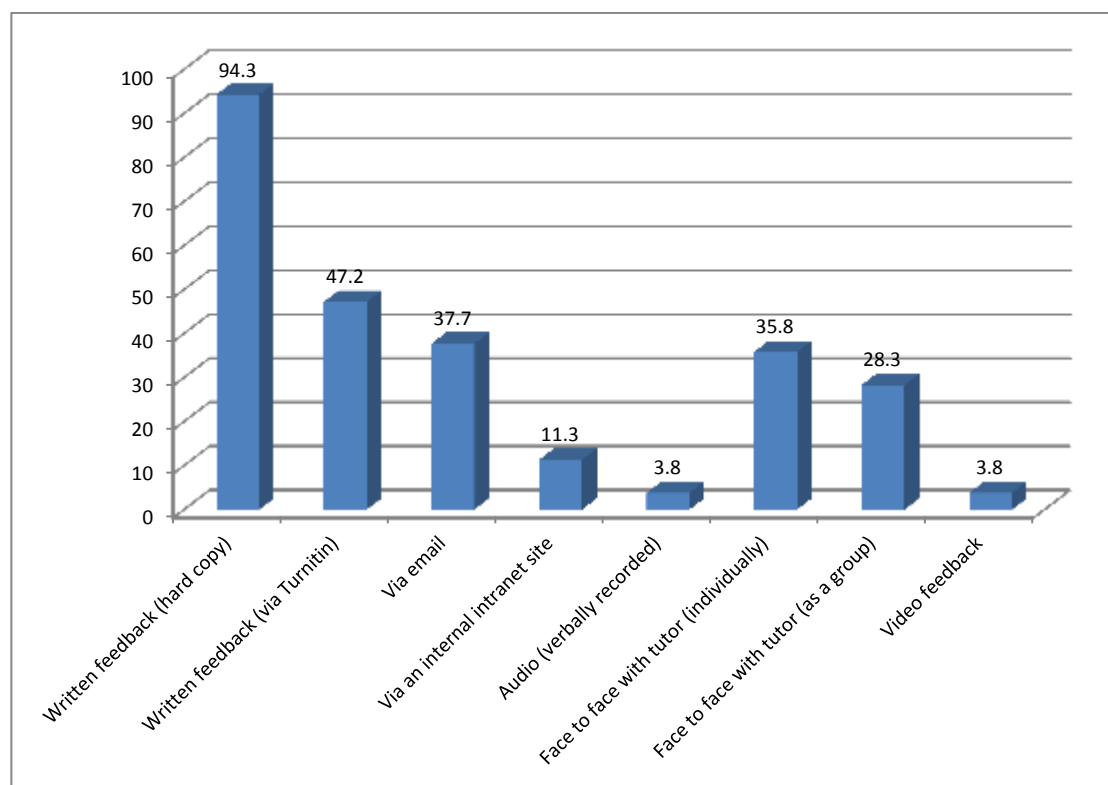


Figure 20 Ways in which respondents received feedback during previous study

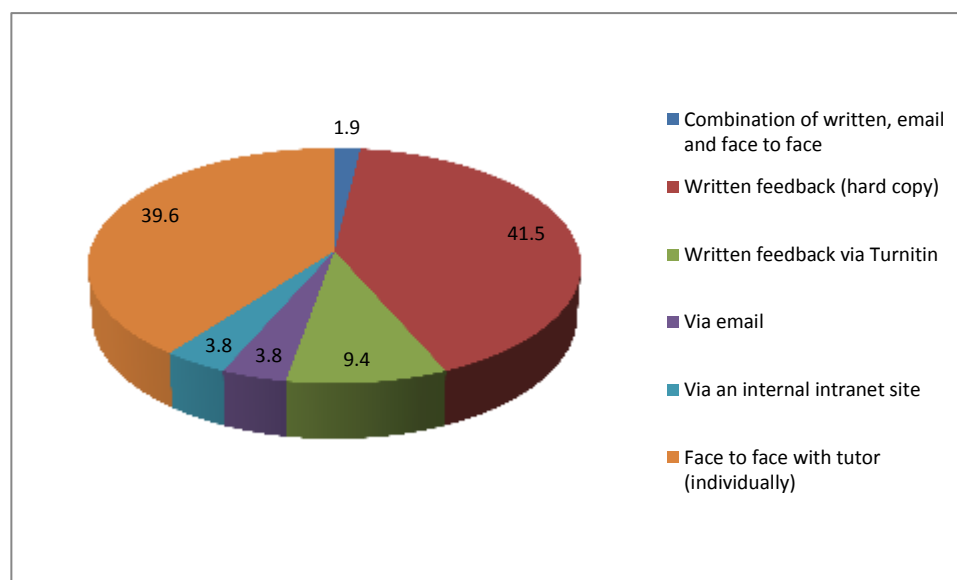
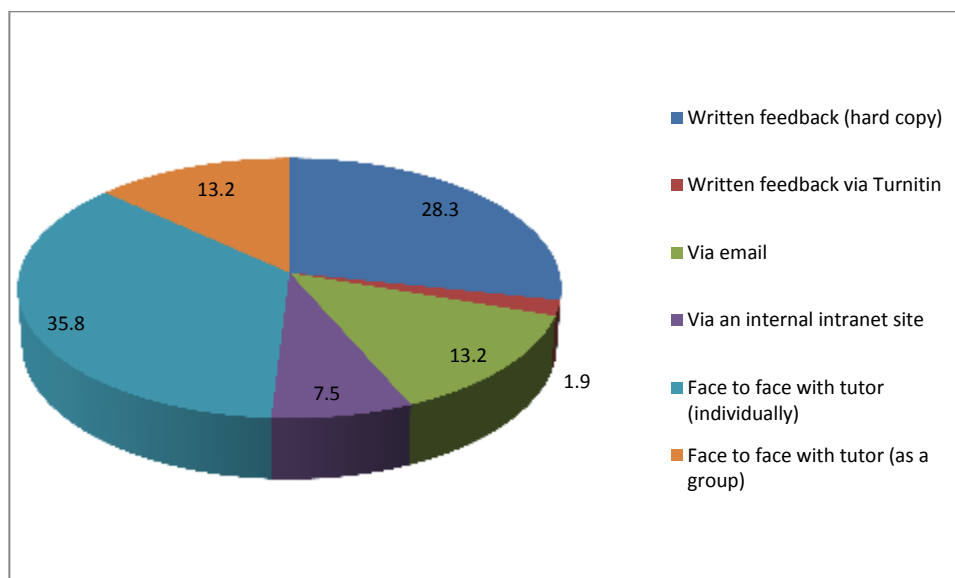


Figure 21 Feedback preferences for assessed work

For non-assessed work, face-to-face with tutor and written feedback (hard copy) had been the most popular choices during previous study experiences (35.8% and 28.9% respectively) but some students also selected face-to-face with tutor in a group for non-assessed work (13.2%) (Fig. 22). Overall respondents expressed quite mixed opinions about the ways in which they had liked to receive feedback. However, more respondents

liked face-to-face feedback than actually had it in their previous experience of study suggesting that face to face interaction with tutors is popular.



**Figure 22 Feedback preferences for non-assessed work**

In relation to their previous study, overwhelmingly respondents had collected and read their feedback (94.3%) with just three respondents claiming that they did not because it wasn't always available/returned to them. Ninety-eight per cent of those responding had used their feedback to help them in future assignments (n=49). Sixty-six per cent of respondents had approached a tutor to discuss academic feedback that accompanied their mark (n=35). Respondents who hadn't approached a tutor to discuss academic feedback primarily did not do so because they were happy with the grade they had received (26.4%, n=14) or because they understood the feedback received (24.5%, n=13) (Table 14). This may mean that students have high expectations of academic feedback as they undertake PGT study based on these positive, prior experiences.

<i>Reasons why respondents didn't collect feedback</i>	<i>No. of respondents % (no.)</i>
I got the grade I expected/I was happy with my grade	26.4 (14)
I did not feel comfortable asking about the feedback	9.4 (5)
I did not agree with the feedback	-
I never thought of asking about the feedback	5.7 (3)
It was not worth the effort	3.8 (2)
I understood the written feedback	24.5 (13)
My tutors were difficult to contact	1.9 (1)
I prefer to discuss academic problems with fellow students	7.5 (4)
Other	-
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 (53)</i>

**Table 14 Reasons why respondents didn't approach a tutor to discuss feedback**

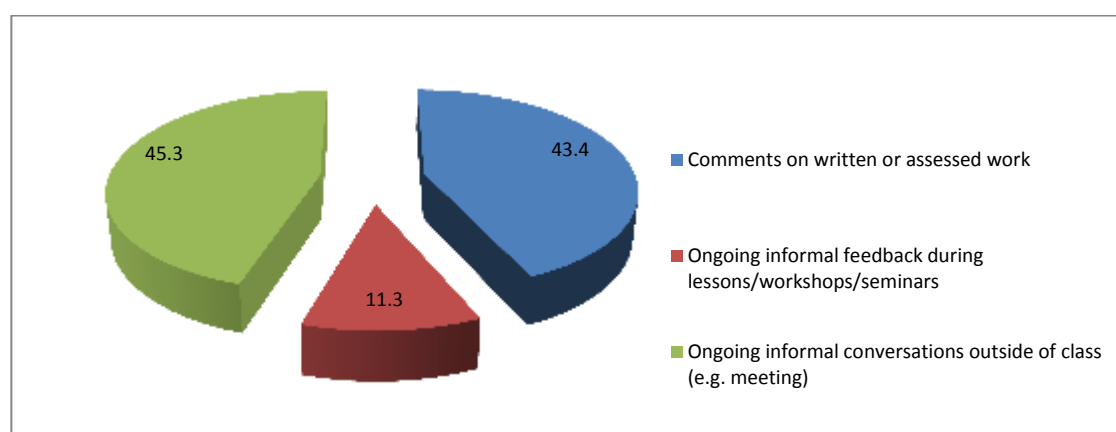
When asked to consider which academic feedback activities were the most (rated 1) and/or least (rated 6) important to them now as postgraduates, respondents rated getting regular academic feedback the most important (75.5%, n=40 rated it 1; 17.0%, n=9 rated it 2) (Table 15). Constructive, critical feedback highlighting how students' work could

improve was also popular (17.0%, n=9 rated it 1; 58.5%, n=31 rated it 2). Feedback which tells students what they did correctly was less popular – the majority of respondents rated it 3 and 4 (34.0%, n=18 and 35.8%, n=19 respectively). The least popular methods of feedback were discussing it with fellow students outside the class was seen as the least important (58.5%, n=31 rated it 6) while feedback that helps raise confidence was not seen as very important (22.6%, n=12 rated it 6).

	1 % (no.)	2 % (no.)	3 % (no.)	4 % (no.)	5 % (no.)	6 % (no.)	Total % (no.)
<i>Getting regular academic feedback</i>	75.5 (40)	17.0 (9)	3.8 (2)	3.8 (2)	-	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Discussing academic feedback with fellow students in the class</i>	-	1.9 (1)	15.1 (8)	18.9 (10)	49.1 (26)	15.1 (8)	100.0 (53)
<i>Discussing academic feedback with fellow students outside the class</i>	-	1.9 (1)	9.4 (5)	9.4 (5)	20.8 (11)	58.5 (31)	100.0 (53)
<i>Academic feedback telling me what I did not do well and how to improve</i>	17.0 (9)	58.5 (31)	15.1 (8)	5.7 (3)	3.8 (2)	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Academic feedback telling me what I did correctly</i>	-	11.3 (6)	34.0 (18)	35.8 (19)	15.1 (8)	3.8 (2)	100.0 (53)
<i>Receiving academic feedback that is encouraging and raises my confidence</i>	7.5 (4)	9.4 (5)	22.6 (12)	26.4 (14)	11.3 (6)	22.6(12)	100.0 (53)

**Table 15 Importance of academic feedback activities at PGT level**

When asked to choose between three options, respondents were fairly even split between those who felt that the most helpful type of academic feedback on their work for their PGT course were informal conversations outside of the class (45.3%, n=24) and those who favoured comments on written or assessed work (43.4%, n=23). Six respondents preferred ongoing informal feedback during lessons/workshops/seminars (11.3%) (Fig. 23).



**Figure 23 Most helpful type of academic feedback on PGT course**

In terms of current preferences as a postgraduate student, respondents rated written (hard copy) – 45.3% and face to face with tutor (individually) as most important – 32.1% (n=17) whilst audio recorded feedback was the least important (52.8%, n=28) perhaps

because students have little experience of it (Table 17). The survey was undertaken in October 2014 when students had only recently commenced their PGT study.

	1 % (no.)	2 % (no.)	3 % (no.)	4 % (no.)	5 % (no.)	6 % (no.)	7 % (no.)	Total % (no.)
<i>Written (hard copy)</i>	45.3 (24)	30.2 (16)	13.2 (7)	11.3 (6)	-	-	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Written feedback via Turnitin</i>	7.5 (4)	18.9 (10)	24.5 (13)	22.6 (12)	18.9 (10)	1.9 (1)	5.7 (3)	100.0 (53)
<i>Via email</i>	13.2 (7)	9.4 (5)	34.0 (18)	30.2 (16)	9.4 (5)	3.8 (2)	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Via an internal intranet site</i>	-	3.8 (2)	3.8 (2)	22.6 (12)	30.2 (16)	28.3 (15)	11.3 (6)	100.0 (53)
<i>Audio (verbally recorded)</i>	-	1.9 (1)	-	1.9 (1)	13.2 (7)	30.2 (16)	52.8 (28)	100.0 (53)
<i>Face to face with tutor (individually)</i>	32.1 (17)	32.1 (17)	13.2 (7)	3.8 (2)	15.1 (8)	3.8 (2)	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Face to face with tutor (as a group)</i>	1.9 (1)	3.8 (2)	11.3 (6)	7.5 (4)	13.2 (7)	32.1 (17)	30.2 (16)	100.0 (53)

**Table 16 Preferences for academic feedback**

As postgraduates, respondents expect feedback on assignments to be received within two weeks (30.2%, n=16) or up to a month (26.4%, n=14). A small proportion of students expect to receive feedback within five days (5.7%, n=3) (Fig. 24). The majority of respondents expect that this will be written (hard copy) – 62.3% (n=33) while written feedback via Turnitin (18.9%, n=10) and via email (11.3%, n=6) are also fairly well used methods (Fig. 25).

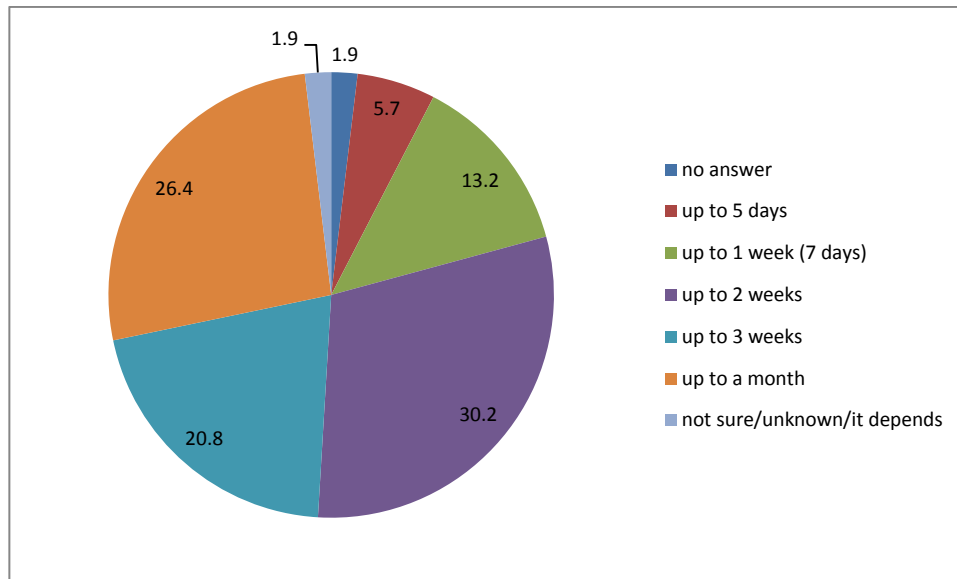


Figure 24 Timeframe for expected assignment feedback

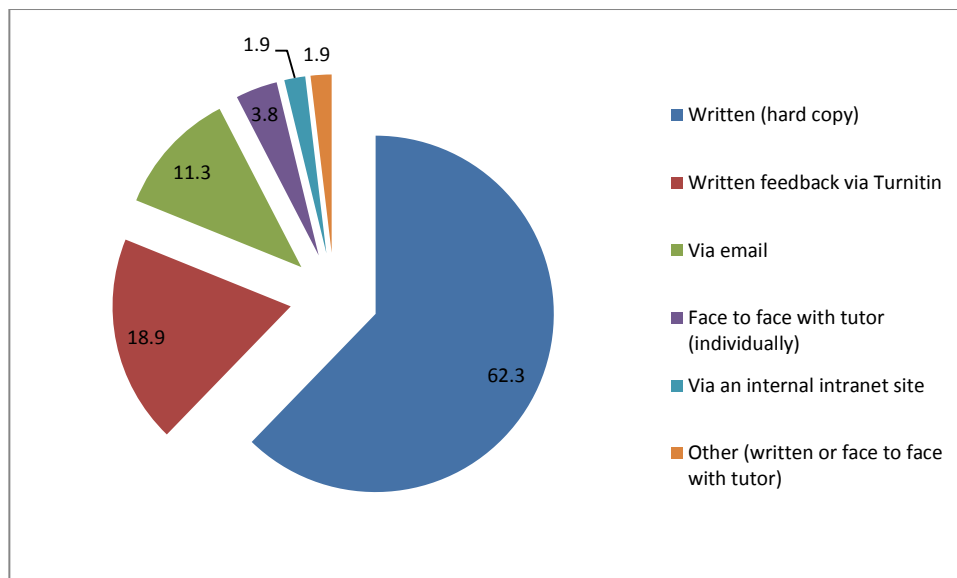
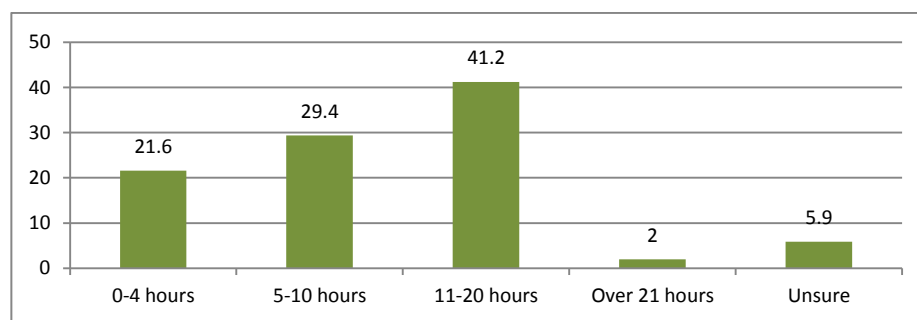


Figure 25 Method by which assignment feedback is received on course

Over two-fifths of respondents expect that they will have between 11-20 contact (face to face) hours per week in total with academic staff on their course (Fig. 26). Under one third anticipated it would be between 5-10 hours (29.4%, n=15) whilst around a fifth thought it would less than four hours a week (21.6%, n=11).



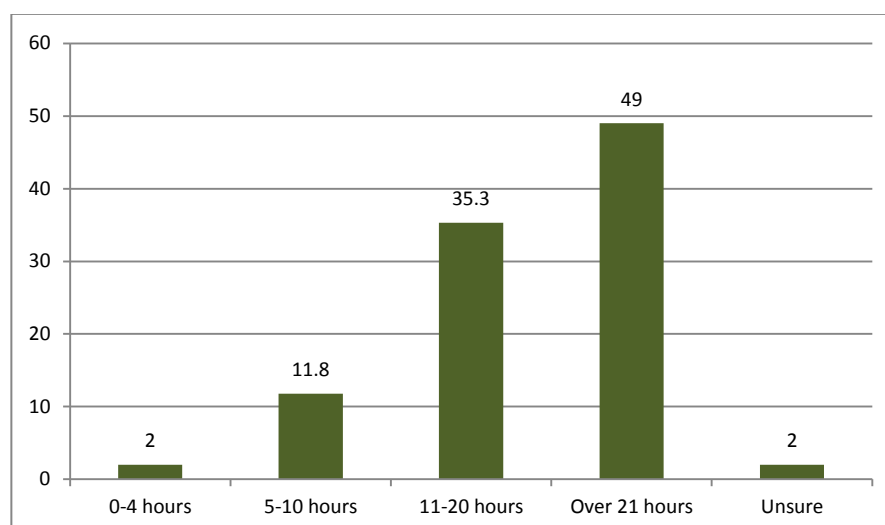
**Figure 26 Contact hours respondents expect to have with staff on PGT course**

Respondents based these estimates on a number of sources as the Table 17 reveals:

Sources	No. of respondents % (no.)
I was told this at an open day	3.8 (2)
I read it in the course literature	7.5 (4)
I have seen the course timetable	34.0 (18)
I am assuming this is the case based on my previous study	32.1 (17)
I have been told it during my induction session	3.8 (2)
None of these	9.4 (5)
Total	100.0 (48)

**Table 17 Sources of expectations of contact hours**

Respondents envisage that independent study will take up a significant part of their week with almost half expecting that it involve more than 20 hours per week (49.0%, n=25) while approximately a third perceive it might be between 11 and 20 hours (35.3%, n=18) (Fig. 27). Half of respondents assumed this on the basis of their previous study (50.0%, n=23) (Table 18).



**Figure 27 Hours of independent study respondents expect to have with staff on PGT course**

Sources	No. of respondents % (no.)
I was told this at an open day	10.9 (5)
I read it in the course literature	13.0 (6)
I have seen the course timetable	4.3 (2)
I am assuming this is the case based on my previous study	50.0 (23)
I have been told it during my induction session	6.5 (3)
None of these	15.2 (7)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100.0 (46)</i>

Table 18 Sources of expectations of independent study hours

Study preferences for this PGT course were a combination of independent and group study (60.4%, n=32) followed by independent study (26.4%, n=14) however the majority of respondents would prefer to be assessed individually (58.5%, n=31). Interestingly, over a third liked to be assessed individually and in a group setting (35.8%).

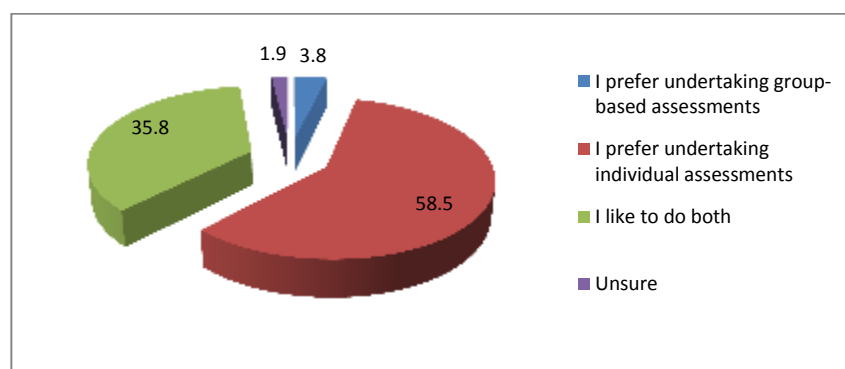


Figure 28 Assessment preferences

PGT students were asked to consider their learning strengths and weaknesses. For all but one of the statements they were asked to reflect upon, the majority of respondents perceived this was a strength they possessed as they selected 'strong' (50.9%, 52.8%, 52.8%, 60.4% and 64.2% respectively) but substantial proportions perceived they were 'adequate' rather than strong (30.2%, 22.6%, 34.0%, 34.0%, 15.1% and 20.8% respectively). Literacy skills emerged as the skill students thought they were best at (81.2%, n=43 rated themselves as 'strong' or 'very strong'). Knowledge of the subject was the skill students expressed the most uncertainty about with 11.4% (n=6) considering themselves 'weak' and 'unsure' in total (Table 19).

	Unsure % (no.)	Weak % (no.)	Adequate % (no.)	Strong % (no.)	Very Strong % (no.)	Total % (no.)
<i>My quick assimilation of ideas is</i>	-	7.5 (4)	30.2 (16)	50.9 (27)	11.3 (6)	100.0 (53)
<i>My ability to organise my study independently</i>	1.9 (1)	5.7 (3)	22.6 (12)	41.5 (22)	28.3 (15)	100.0 (53)

<i>My study skills (e.g. critical analysis)</i>	1.9 (1)	3.8 (2)	34.0 (18)	52.8 (28)	7.5 (4)	100.0 (53)
<i>My knowledge of the subject I will be studying on this PG course</i>	5.7 (3)	5.7 (3)	34.0 (18)	52.8 (28)	1.9 (1)	100.0 (53)
<i>My literacy skills</i>	-	3.8 (2)	15.1 (8)	60.4 (32)	20.8 (11)	100.0 (53)
<i>My numeracy skills</i>	-	5.7 (3)	20.8 (11)	64.2 (34)	9.4 (5)	100.0 (53)

Table 19 Learning strengths and weaknesses

### Current study

The majority of respondents were studying full time (94.3%, n=50) and anticipate they will complete their PGT course between July and December 2015 (83.0%, n=44). For those studying full time, wanting to concentrate on the subject (62.0%, n=31) and perceiving that this was most appropriate way to study the course (52.0%, n=27) were key drivers for this mode of study. For respondents studying part-time (3) this was mainly because they couldn't afford to study full time or had a job (66.7%, n=2). Full time study was seen as the most desirable study mode while part time mode was selected because of financial constraints and work commitments.

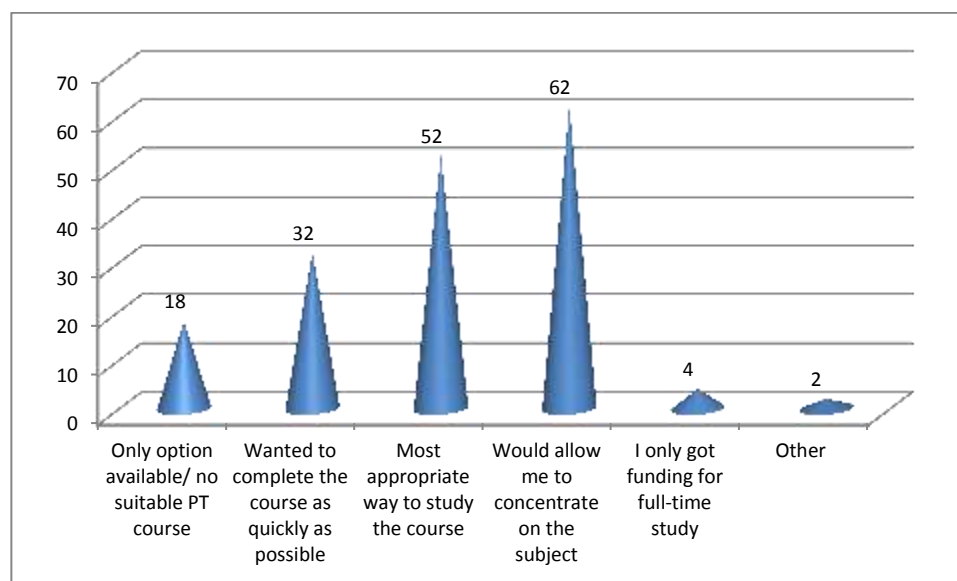


Figure 29 Reasons for choosing full time mode of study

### Attitudes towards postgraduate study

Respondents were confident in their response that employers value a postgraduate qualification more than an undergraduate one (75.5%, n=40) whilst 12 students were unsure how employers perceived PGT qualifications (22.6%). Just one respondent felt that employers value undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications equally (1.9%).



When reflecting on how the PGT course would develop their skills it emerged that respondents were clear it would help develop their research skills, provide practical experience in their subject area and improve their employment prospects (67.9%, 67.3% and 62.3% definitely agree respectively) (Table 20).

	<i>Definitely disagree % (no.)</i>	<i>Mostly disagree % (no.)</i>	<i>Unsure % (no.)</i>	<i>Agree % (no.)</i>	<i>Definitely agree % (no.)</i>
<i>Develop my research skills</i>	-	-	-	32.1 (17)	67.9 (36)
<i>Develop my transferable skills</i>	-	-	7.5 (4)	37.7 (20)	54.7 (29)
<i>Provide employer networking opportunities</i>	-	-	13.2 (7)	52.8 (28)	34.0 (18)
<i>Provide research networking opportunities</i>	-	-	13.2 (7)	49.1 (26)	37.7 (20)
<i>Provide practical experience in the subject area</i>	-	-	-	32.7 (17)	67.3 (35)
<i>Develop my research paper writing skills</i>	-	-	1.9 (1)	41.5 (22)	56.6 (30)
<i>Improve my confidence about independent learning</i>	-	-	7.5 (4)	37.7 (20)	54.7 (29)
<i>Help me to present myself with confidence</i>	-	-	7.7 (4)	48.1 (25)	44.2 (23)
<i>Improve my communication skills</i>	-	-	5.7 (3)	49.1 (26)	45.3 (24)
<i>Provide confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems</i>	-	-	9.4 (5)	50.9 (27)	39.6 (21)
<i>Help me reflect on my professional development needs</i>	-	-	15.1 (8)	47.2 (25)	37.7 (20)
<i>Better prepare me for future employment</i>	-	-	5.7 (3)	37.7 (20)	56.6 (30)
<i>Improve my employment prospects</i>	-	1.9 (1)	3.8 (2)	32.1 (17)	62.3 (33)

**Table 20 Ways in which PGT course will develop skills**

In terms of the skills it was important for respondents to develop whilst undertaking this particular PGT course, the skill considered most important (rated 1) is knowledge of subject (79.2%, n=42 rated it 1). If the total scores for the ratings 1 to 5 are considered it is clear that self-management, problem solving and communication are viewed as the most important skills to develop during the PGT course (42, 42 and 40 respectively).

Of lesser importance (rated 10) are business awareness, numeracy, information technology, and work experience (26.4%, n=14; 20.8%, n=11; 18.9%, n=10; 15.1%, n=respectively). Similarly, if the total scores for the ratings 6 to 10 are considered, postgraduates do not look to their PGT course to help them develop their information technology, numeracy, business awareness, leadership or team working skills (46, 45, 40, 38 and 33 respectively).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
<i>Business awareness</i>	-	9.4 (5)	1.9 (1)	5.7 (3)	7.5 (4)	9.4 (5)	9.4 (5)	13.2 (7)	17.0 (9)	26.4 (14)	100.0 (53)
<i>Communication</i>	5.7 (3)	22.6 (12)	24.5 (13)	7.5 (4)	15.1 (8)	15.1 (8)	3.8 (2)	3.8 (2)	1.9 (1)	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Information technology (IT)</i>	-	1.9 (1)	1.9 (1)	7.5 (4)	1.9 (1)	9.4 (5)	15.1 (8)	15.1 (8)	28.3 (15)	18.9 (10)	100.0 (53)
<i>Knowledge of subject</i>	79.2 (42)	11.3 (6)	1.9 (1)	-	3.8 (2)	-	1.9 (1)	-	1.9 (1)	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Leadership</i>	-	1.9 (1)	1.9 (1)	11.3 (6)	13.2 (7)	20.8 (11)	13.2 (7)	24.5 (13)	5.7 (3)	7.5 (4)	100.0 (53)
<i>Numeracy</i>	-	-	-	7.5 (4)	7.5 (4)	7.5 (4)	20.8 (11)	17.0 (9)	18.9 (10)	20.8 (11)	100.0 (53)
<i>Self-management</i>	5.7 (3)	22.6 (12)	20.8 (11)	18.9 (10)	11.3 (6)	9.4 (5)	1.9 (1)	3.8 (2)	1.9 (1)	3.8 (2)	100.0 (53)
<i>Problem solving</i>	1.9 (1)	17.0 (9)	32.1 (17)	15.1 (8)	13.2 (7)	7.5 (4)	3.8 (2)	7.5 (4)	1.9 (1)	-	100.0 (53)
<i>Team working</i>	-	1.9 (1)	7.5 (4)	9.4 (5)	18.9 (10)	11.3 (6)	20.8 (11)	9.4 (5)	13.2 (7)	7.5 (4)	100.0 (53)
<i>Work experience</i>	7.5 (4)	11.3 (6)	7.5 (4)	17.0 (9)	7.5 (4)	9.4 (5)	9.4 (5)	5.7 (3)	9.4 (5)	15.1 (8)	100.0 (53)

Table 21 Importance of skills to develop whilst on PGT course

Expectations post course reveal that almost half of respondent believe they will find a job appropriate to their level of skills and knowledge (47.2%, n=25). Just under a third hope to progress on to further study (30.2%, n=16). The remainder hope to set up their own business (7.5%, n=4), stay with their existing employer in the same role (3.8%, n=2) or move into a new role with the same employer (1.9%, n=1). Five respondents stated 'other' (Fig. 30). Consideration of their comments reveals that two hope to carry on with their studies but that is dependent on how they fare on the PGT course whilst two feel they may need more work experience:

*"I may need more practical experience and will look for a job within the field"*

*"I would like to progress to further studies however this is dependent on how the masters goes, funding or whether I am ready to find an appropriate job to my levels of skills and knowledge".*

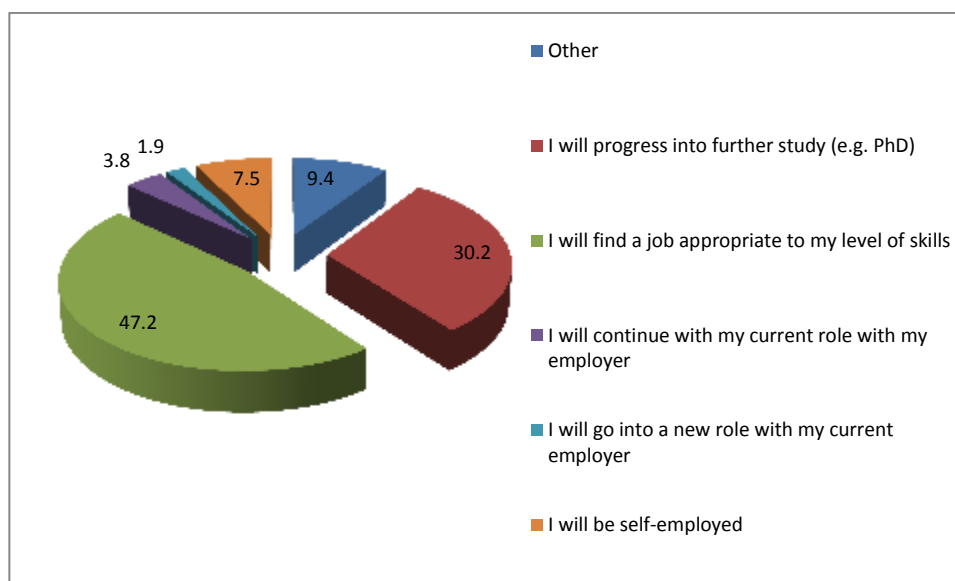


Figure 30 Expectations post PGT course

The expected impact of their new qualification is primarily, their ability to enter a specialist role (71.2%, n=37). Earning more money or being a higher pay grade emerged as the second most expected impact but only 19.2% of respondents selected this option (n=10).

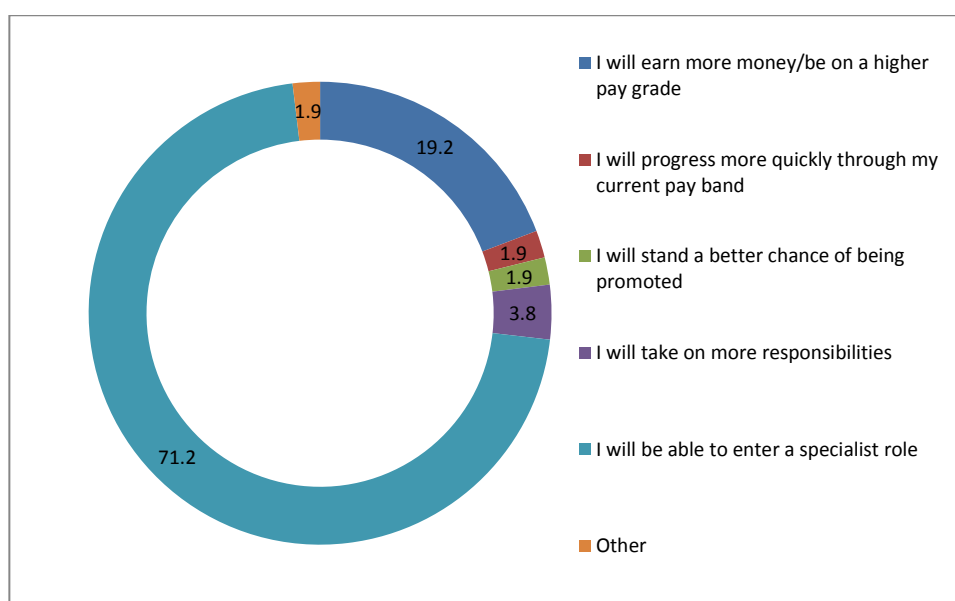


Figure 31 Expected impacts of new qualification

Over half of respondents hope to pursue a professional career related to their postgraduate study (54.7%, n=29). Less popular options include self-employment related to their PG study or an academic career in HE (both 11.3%, n=6) whilst five respondents were unsure/undecided (9.4%) (Fig.32).

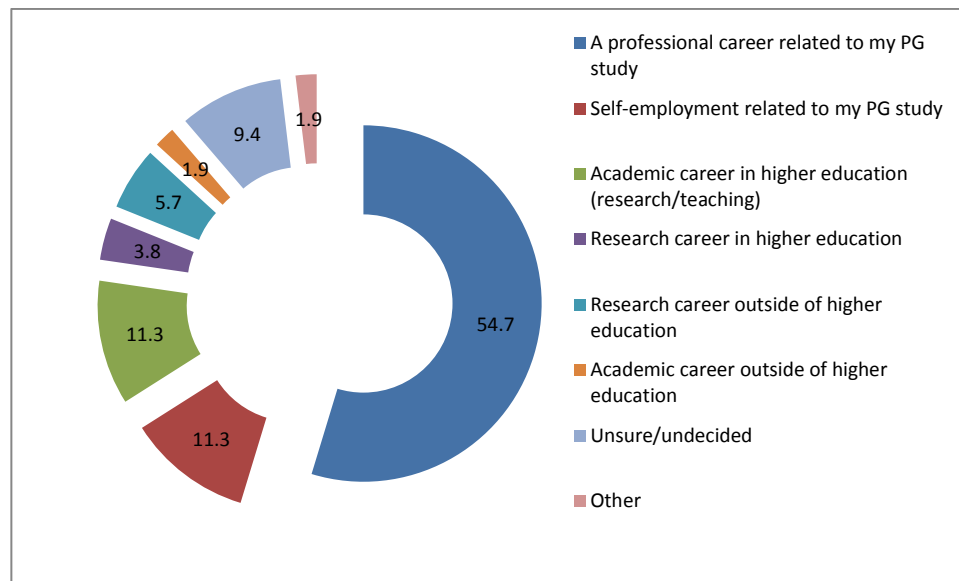


Figure 32 Career preferences post PG study

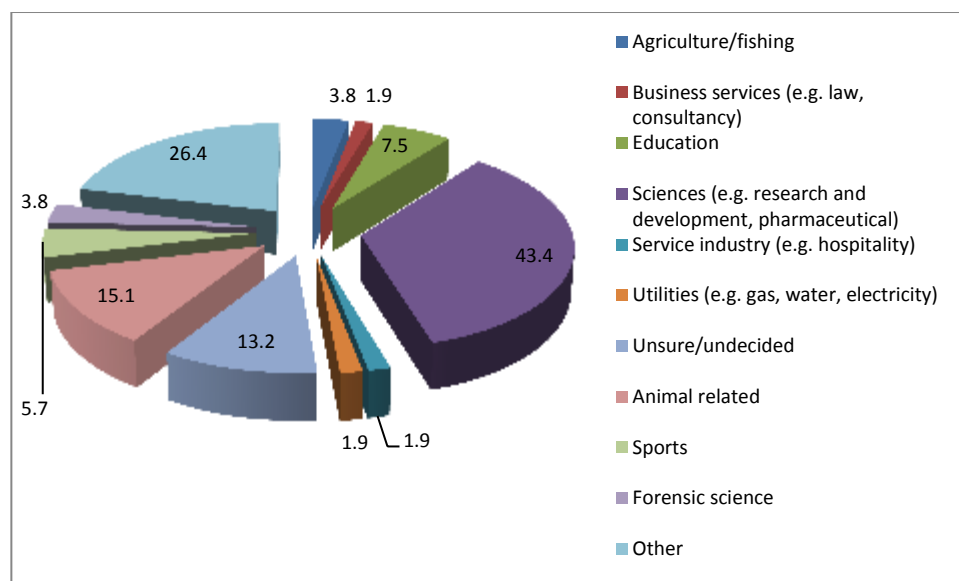


Figure 33 Anticipated career sector

## Section 2: Correlations

Analyses were performed to explore correlations between ordinal variables where there are response scales using Spearman's rho. They considered anxiety, expectations of PGT study and learning strengths and weaknesses.

It was discovered that there was a medium, negative correlation between anxiety and confidence (questions 50 and 49) with high levels of anxiety associated with lower levels of confidence: coping with the standard of work ( $\rho = -.36$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ), getting involved in university life ( $\rho = -.38$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ), making friends ( $\rho = -.35$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.05$ ), looking after health and welfare ( $\rho = -.42$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and coping with balancing life demands and study ( $\rho = -.39$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ) (see Appendix 1). This would suggest that students'

whose confidence levels were low in relation to coping with the standard of work or balancing life and study were experiencing higher levels of anxiety.

There was also a medium, positive correlation between students' expectations about PGT study and their expectations as to how the PGT course would develop their skills (questions 46 and 67). Based on these correlations it would appear that students expect to be supported to develop, so that they can meet the needs of the programme and become what they think their course will lead them towards. Together these relationships indicate students' high expectations of their PGT course and how it will prepare them for a future role.

For example:

Develop my research skills (67.1) and Postgraduate level study requires more independent study than at undergraduate level (46.1) ( $\rho = .33$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Improves my confidence about independent learning (67.7) and Postgraduate level study requires more independent study than at undergraduate level (46.1) ( $\rho = .33$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Develop my research paper writing skills (67.6) and Postgraduate level should provide a more personalised study experience for the student than at undergraduate level ( $\rho = .38$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Provide confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems (67.10) and I expect more value for money at postgraduate level than at undergraduate level (46.2) ( $\rho = .31$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Help me reflect on my professional development needs (67.11) and I expect more value for money at postgraduate level than at undergraduate level (46.2) ( $\rho = .38$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Better prepare me for future employment (67.12) and I expect more value for money at postgraduate level than at undergraduate level (46.2) ( $\rho = .38$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.01$ ) (see Appendix 2).

In addition there were some medium, positive correlations between learning strength and weaknesses and students' expectations about skills development (questions 65 and 67) suggesting hopes about the PGT course were positively associated with students' perceptions of their learning strengths. For example, perceiving that you are able to quickly assimilate ideas is positively correlated with the perception that the PGT course will help develop research skills and provide the student with networking opportunities:

Develop my research skills (67.1) and My quick assimilation of ideas ( $\rho = .35$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Provide research networking opportunities (67.4) and My quick assimilation of ideas ( $\rho = .34$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

For the next five statements, students' perception that their knowledge of the subject was strong was positively associated with the perception that the PGT course would help them develop their research skills, provide them with networking opportunities, help them reflect on their professional development, improve their communication skills and their employment prospects. These correlations suggest that the students in this cohort are individuals who are confident about and keen to develop their knowledge and they take their MSc course because they want to be able to put this knowledge to some practical use. They have a sense of themselves as a clever student who will be able to do good things with the right support – are they then taking the course to gain that support?

Develop my research skills (67.1) and My knowledge of the subject I will be studying on this postgraduate course (65.4) ( $\rho = .31$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p < .05$ )

Provide research networking opportunities (67.4) and My knowledge of the subject I will be studying on this postgraduate course (65.4) ( $\rho = .34$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p < .01$ )

Improve my communication skills (67.9) and My knowledge of the subject I will be studying on this postgraduate course (65.4) ( $\rho = .35$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p < .05$ )

Help me reflect on my professional development (67.11) and My knowledge of the subject I will be studying on this postgraduate course (65.4) ( $\rho = .41$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p < .01$ )

Improve my employment prospects (67.13) and My knowledge of the subject I will be studying on this postgraduate course ( $\rho = .37$ ,  $n=53$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### **Section 3: Significant comparison between groups**

A number of comparisons between groups using basic frequencies and exploring for significant relationships using chi-square were undertaken. These groups included generational status, route into study, age group, domiciled status, and gender, mode of study, ethnicity and discipline. No significant relationships were identified.

Whilst there were no statistically significant differences in relation to feedback, interestingly, in relation to assessed work females preferred written feedback (hard copy) – 52.9% ( $n=18$ ) whilst males preferred face to face with tutor individually - 57.9% ( $n=11$ ). When it came to non-assessed work the largest proportion of women preferred face to face with tutor (individually) (35.3%,  $n=12$ ) as did the largest group of men (36.8%,  $n=7$ ).

There were no significant generational, domiciled status, age, gender or situation differences when examining who approached a tutor to discuss feedback in their previous study. However, the responses indicated that men had been more likely to approach a tutor to discuss feedback than females (Table 23).

<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Overall responses</i>	
Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
73.7% (14)	26.3% (5)	61.8% (21)	38.2% (13)	66.0% (35)	34.0% (18)

**Table 22 Approaching a tutor to discuss feedback**

## Summary

Consideration of the results of the ESS reveal that the responding PGT STEM students at the University of Lincoln are mainly UK domiciled, White British and living in rented accommodation. If we consider the 'average' respondent, they are single and travel less than five miles to the university. They are female, under 25, undertaking a PGT course full time, straight from university after achieving a BSc Hons which they received at a university in the UK, probably at the University of Lincoln, on a course that didn't have a sandwich element. Progressing on to PGT study was a natural step for them as is studying at the same university again. The course content also appealed to them.

Fees for PGT study emerged as an important consideration and this cohort generally found out about funding through the University of Lincoln. They are funding their PGT study with a scholarship plus savings or their parents are supporting them but they are also working part time short hours to support themselves. Funding affected their decision to study either full or part time and they have outstanding debt.

The 'average' respondent is interested in their subject and hopes that they will develop specialist skills. They hope that this course will help them specialise their knowledge and they appreciate it will require more independent study but they are worried about coping with this level of study and getting into more debt. Most respondents are slightly anxious about PGT study and expect they will use the University of Lincoln's careers service.

They have a clear expectation of how to study and like to receive written feedback or face to face individual feedback within two weeks - which they do read. They expect they will have between 11 and 20 contact hours a week which they have based on their experiences of previous study as well as looking at the timetable and they estimate that independent study will take up more than 20 hours a week, which, again, they have based on prior study experiences. Most respondents like group and independent study at PGT level but prefer to be assessed individually. They perceive that their main learning strength lies in organising their independent study.

In terms of their hopes for this and course and the future, this cohort hopes to develop their research skills and gain some practical experience. They think it is more important for them to develop their knowledge of the subject, communication skills and self-management rather than their business awareness when undertaking a PGT qualification. They think that employers value a PGT qualification over an undergraduate

one and that it will help them improve their employment prospects. They hope to find a job appropriate to their skills and knowledge post PGT qualification and enter a specialist role.

From the correlations explored in Section 2, it might be suggested that PGT students' anxiety levels increase as their confidence levels decrease. They expect to be supported in ways that correspond to their perceptions of what or who the course will allow them to become. For example, if they are confident about their own ability to acquire knowledge and they want to become a research student they will expect the course will equip them with whatever it is they need to become that (e.g. independent research skills). The correlations also suggest that expectations of PGT study are related to expectations of skills development and learning strengths and weaknesses are also related to expectations of skills development.



## 4. Exploring the student experience by focus group

### Key points

A semi-structured interview schedule of five questions with a number of prompts was developed, from the themes which had emerged from the survey results, by a group consisting of the project lead, project researcher and the institutional researchers. Survey completers were contacted and invited to take part in a focus group. Those who had not received a scholarship were given a £30 Amazon voucher for participation whilst taking part was a condition of scholarship acceptance for award recipients.

Five focus groups were undertaken at the University of Lincoln to enable group discussions amongst students by scholarship amount. Twenty two postgraduate students attended the focus groups.

In addition, students that were unable to attend the scheduled groups were given the opportunity to complete the questions and return their answers via email. This meant that a further 21 students provided their opinions of PGT study. Their responses were analysed together with the transcripts of the focus groups.

The characteristics of the 43 participants who attended the focus groups and completed the questions are illustrated in Table 23:

- Students not in receipt of a scholarship [*Group 1*];
- Students in receipt of £1500 [*Group 2*];
- Students in receipt of 60% fees scholarship [*Group 3 – two focus groups*];
- Students in receipt of 100% fees scholarship [*Group 4*].

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Course</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>Domicile</i>
<i>Group 1</i>	F	Other	MSc Forensic Science	FT	EU
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour*	PT	UK
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour*	FT	UK
<i>Group 2</i>	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK

	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology*	FT	UK
Group 3	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Biotechnology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Sport Science*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour*	PT	UK
	F	British	MSc Sport Science*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour*	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology*	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology*	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Sport Science*	FT	UK

	M	British	MSc Sport Science*	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology*	FT	UK
Group 4	M	British	MSc Biotechnology	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Science*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Sport Science*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc Forensic Anthropology*	FT	UK
	M	British	MSc Biotechnology*	FT	UK
	F	British	MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour*	FT	UK

Participants indicated by \* completed the questions by email.

**Table 23 Focus Group participants**

	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Domicile</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>EU</i>
Biotechnology	1	8	9	0
Clinical Animal Behaviour	13	1	14	0
Forensic Anthropology	9	4	13	0
Forensic Science	2	0	1	1
Sport Science	3	2	5	0
	28	15	42	1
<i>Total</i>	43		43	

**Table 24 Focus group participants - gender and domicile**

The focus group participants were mainly female (28) with the largest groups of students enrolled on MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour (14) and MSc Forensic Anthropology (13). Participants from MSc Biotechnology were predominantly male (8 of 9). All but one of the participants was UK domiciled (42).

The findings are presented so that the response to the questions asked of each participant group can be clearly discerned.

### **Findings from the scholarship and non-scholarship student focus groups**

Question 1: Why did you decide to undertake study at PG level?

Prompt: Why this university?

#### *Group 1*

Amongst postgraduate students who had not received a scholarship, the desire to enhance employment opportunities and to specialise in a particular subject area emerged as the main motivations for PGT study:

*I thought that by doing a postgraduate, a Masters, it would help me find a job afterwards and further my CV.*

*I chose this so I could have better job opportunities, that's mostly the reason because when you've just come out an undergrad, people don't consider you experienced.*

It was perceived that having a postgraduate qualification set you apart from other candidates with just an undergraduate degree:

*I find like everyone is getting an undergraduate degree now. It's becoming the normal thing isn't it?*

Two students articulated their wish to specialise in a particular subject area (Clinical Animal Behaviour) one of whom is already employed as a veterinary surgeon:

*I realised that there were gaps in my knowledge / my knowledge was outdated in the area of pet behaviour which had not been a formal part of my veterinary degree. I wanted to develop my skills in this area.*

*I took psychology as my Undergraduate degree, and if I wanted to work within psychology then some sort of further degree was required. I had always wanted to be a vet, but I missed the grades. So took psychology with the aim of specialising in Animal Behaviour further down the line.*

The University of Lincoln was attractive to three of the four students in this group who are studying the MSc in Clinical Animal Behaviour as they spoke of the reputations of the academics in this field:

*I did a bit of research for my course and it seemed like the best place. The best lecturers in their field.*

*I chose this university as it had [name] as the course leader ([name] was at the time I was looking) and [name] is world-renowned.*

*I heard [name] speak at the British Small Animal Veterinary Association Congress in 2013 and wanted to learn more about [name]'s approach to this field. When I investigated further study (at university level or through professional CPD courses) I realised that the team at Lincoln was offering the most exciting and current approach and I wanted to be taught by them.*

The flexibility of this particular course with a part time option made it possible for one student to fit it alongside employment and family commitments:

*Lincoln was offering a part time option so that I could commute – it would not have been possible for me to study full time as well as continue my career as a vet and it was not an option for me to move away from the home that I share with my husband and children.*

This along with the new laboratories and guest lecturers was also something that attracted the interest of the student studying MSc Biotechnology:

*I researched the university, I saw the fact that they had the new labs that they had proper lecturers and they invited people from other countries.*

The location of the university helped one student make her decision to study in Lincoln alongside the reputation of the staff: “nearby to some family friends as well, so I can visit them”.

The cost of the course fees and the alumni discount were mentioned by two of the students in relation to the University of Lincoln as a deciding factor in coming here:

*The fees, still expensive but I managed to get the discount because I studied in the UK before so it helped.*

*What was good about this university is they gave you 20 per cent off the tuition fees.*

## Group 2

Participants in Group 2 had received a set amount towards their course fees - £1500. Their discussion was less about developing knowledge and a deep interest in the subject matter. Overwhelmingly they felt that postgraduate study would help them get a better job on completion.

*Well in our field in Forensic Anthropology it's hard to get a job, there's a lot of people doing it so the more training, the more formal training you have the more likely it is that you're going to get it. That's why I did it.*

*To further my career options.*

*It gives you more opportunities to work in a niche area.*

Some of the students liked the prospect of focussing on a specific area:

*My degree was very broad as well so I wanted to specify it by doing this one and I was in an office job for four years which got a bit boring.*

## Group 3

Participants in Group 3 had received scholarships of 60% of the course fees. Many of them had studied at the University of Lincoln before and this appeared to be an important factor in their decision to undertake postgraduate study at the same institution. The reputation of academic staff on particular courses was attractive to some, as was a deep interest in the subject matter itself. Future employment prospects were also a consideration. Course content was another important factor encouraging people to apply to courses at the University of Lincoln.

Alumni of the University of Lincoln were inclined to continue their studies here for a number of reasons including the familiarity of the surroundings and the staff:

*This university was where I undertook my undergraduate degree and continuing here was what I always wanted to do. I didn't want to move universities.*

*I decided to undertake a PG degree here at the University of Lincoln because I really enjoyed my undergraduate degree here.*

*Obviously I did my undergrad here and my dissertation tutor is the [name] that's running our course now.*

Some of the staff on their undergraduate degree had spoken about Masters study and particular courses which had inspired some to stay on and study further:

*I was doing my degree here in Forensic Investigation and Technology and the tutor at the time spoke about this course. It sounded really interesting.*

The facilities on offer were attractive to some students:

*The new facilities as well are a pulling factor. The Joseph Banks Laboratories opening up. If it was all based out of the old science building it might not have been so attractive.*

*The reputation of some academic staff, the course and university itself were vital considerations for some:*

*I have been told that the MSc I am doing at Lincoln is the best in the country due to it being run by [name] and [name] who I know from my undergraduate programme.*

*The reputation of the Department as far as Animal Sciences goes; it seems to be quite high.*

*This University offered the perfect course for what I wanted as well as interactions with many of the professors I wanted to work with.*

*I think mine's a bit different in the fact that for me it wasn't necessarily the course but the reputation of the lecturers and also the accreditation it holds with it with regards to professional standing.*

Indeed a few students had actually identified the MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour as a course they wanted to study before they even began their undergraduate degree, suggesting they had a longstanding career path in mind:

*I did my Bachelor's here because I wanted to do the Masters so it was always from sixth form what I wanted to do.*

*I graduated in 2011 always with this particular Masters course in the back of my mind.*

University of Lincoln alumni were awarded a 30% fee reduction which helped make the decision an easy one for some of the participants, as this student articulated:

*It was a very convenient coincidence that the University of Lincoln offered this course as I had previously studied here as an undergraduate between 2002 and 2005, this meant that I was eligible for discounted student fees, which helped me decide [to] apply for the course.*

The content of the course itself was appealing to some individuals who wanted to focus on a specific area in readiness for future employment:

*I knew that my undergraduate degree didn't contain enough information and skill development that is required to work successfully in my field.*

*I decided to start up my own doggy day care business last year (although we have only just opened last week). I felt that although I have a passion for dogs, the Masters course would give me a much broader understanding of them (and other companion animals) which would be of great benefit to my business.*

Indeed, employability was a stimulus to some to undertake PGT study in the hope that they might get a job or that it might set them apart from other job candidates with an undergraduate degree. Their comments reveal that their plans are growing and adapting and that they are making decisions in the context of what they have and what is available:

*Better job prospects.*

*I think it's pretty much the same reason so the way I thought about it was when I go for an interview and the employer opens your CV and compared to everyone else who's got a degree immediately they'll see a Masters and I was hoping, personally, that that would give me a step up to increasing employability.*

*I wanted the advancement on undergraduate; I felt like I wanted to learn at a higher level and have a step up for my future career. Also I am very interested in PhDs and I know that it is uncommon for students to get a PhD from undergrad without gaining postgrad education first.*

#### **Group 4**

Overwhelmingly participants in Group 4 had decided to commence study at postgraduate level to improve their employment prospects. Some spoke of the Masters as being one step of a journey they were making:

*Yes for me I believed that I wanted another step up going into the job market.*

*Simply due to the lack of jobs in my field of study. To make any progress in the subject area, further study is necessary.*

*Yes because my course is quite specialist so another first step on a long journey.*

*I was considering doing a doctorate and felt a masters course would be a good interim step.*



They spoke of the opportunities that would be available to them if they continued in HE in terms of jobs and career advancement:

*I wanted to further my career and I was told this was one way of obtaining entry into my desired career path of being an animal behaviourist.*

*Career possibilities especially in the science related sector. The further or the higher the qualifications are the easier it is to open doors.*

*Completing this postgraduate course will help me to fulfil my career goals.*

Related to the favourable career prospects PGT study brought was an opportunity to undertake study in a niche area which could help students fulfil their career and personal aspirations:

*To learn more specialised knowledge for the area I want to go in.*

*Furthermore, I was particularly interested in the field that I am now studying, which I could not have studied at undergraduate.*

One student made reference to the fact the Masters course she had chosen had a module on starting your own business which was of particular appeal to her:

*From this I decided that a more practical course was probably better for me as I learn more that way but I also wanted a good taught theory to back it up, which led me to post graduate study. There was also a 'how to' module on starting yourself up with your own business (consultant).*

The sentiment that having a PGT degree set you apart from others with an UG was expressed:

*I feel that postgraduate study 'sets apart' someone with an MSc from someone with a BSc, as far as employers are concerned. It shows that you've gone that extra mile; it's a bit like 'extra credit' in terms of education.*

Many of Group 4 had studied previously at the University of Lincoln so its familiarity was appealing:

*I did my undergraduate degree here; I already had friends, a home, a life and I knew the university as an institution well.*

*I did my undergrad here so I knew all the staff.*

*I had to study at Lincoln as I have three teenage children, but it is also where I studied my degree so I was familiar with the environment.*

The reputation of the University of Lincoln itself, particular subjects, courses, staff and departments were mentioned by the majority of this group:

*The course is specialist so it's really the only one in the country and the staff are really good.*

*Lincoln is also a well-established university is above average in the league tables and it was my best option.*

*It seemed like a sensible choice to stay here, especially when they are also highly regarded for this subject.*

*The location of the university was less important but was still mentioned by two of the participants:*

*I chose Lincoln because of its location so I could travel daily to university.*

*The university was also a commutable distance from my house, although I may have considered moving closer to be able to attend this one above all others.*

#### Summary of the findings: differences and similarities

Students in all four groups felt that studying an MSc at the University of Lincoln would help enhance their CV and subsequent employment and career prospects. Students generally had a career in mind and something that they hoped to become illustrated when they listed forms of employment, for example. They perceived that their course was a way of achieving this and some students conceptualised this in more instrumental terms such as wanting a career as a doggy day care owner. However, they do want to become something they see as valuable - they are not talking about the amount of money they will earn or becoming vastly successful rather they have aspirations to take up a position in society that they see as valuable and the programme offers them knowledge and skills to enable them to do this. A smaller number were motivated by a love of the subject. The University of Lincoln was appealing particularly to alumni because of the generous alumni discount as well as its familiarity. Many students were attracted by the reputation of specific academic staff on their courses, the facilities on offer and the reputation of the university. These sentiments were common to all four groups of students.

Question 2. Are you managing with your studies?

Prompt: If yes how?

Prompt: If not why not?

Prompt: Is your PGT study experience similar or different to that of your undergraduate?

Prompt: What about feedback?

Prompt: What about managing work?

Prompt: What support has helped and what might have helped you?

### Group 1

Three of the four participants in Group 1 did not feel like they were managing their studies particularly well. One student was happy that she was managing her PGT studies well, as she was able to effectively organise her study around her other commitments:

*Yes I am achieving well and feel that I can complete my studies easily, I do not feel stressed. The main reasons for this are that there is a good structure so that we know what assignments etc. will be coming up well in advance and can organise my studies to fit around my other commitments.*

The other three were finding things harder. One student felt that the course hadn't met her expectations and she was unhappy with her experience as a result. Her MSc course was more academic than practical and this was causing her some anxiety because she felt her lack of practical experience may hinder her in securing a good job:

*Apparently Masters are more academic than practical... So when you see that you can't just get out of the course and say 'yes I'm experienced'. You can't. So that's been causing me trouble with my coursework and everything.*

Another student was struggling with feelings of isolation and lack of motivation:

*I feel very isolated (despite having met a group of people on my course that I get on with very well, and my housemates are wonderful). I feel down pretty much all the time, and have no inclination to do any work due to feeling so down in the dumps. This is meaning that I'm not putting the best effort I could into my work.*

PGT study was perceived by Group 1 as being different to UG study. For two of the full time students, understandably, it was more intense and took up a lot of their time. They

were perhaps unprepared for the level and intensity of the work they were expected to undertake:

*Like I hardly meet up with anyone or see anyone because I'm so busy in my room or in the library trying to catch up with work which I think I miss the social side of my undergraduate degree. Because no matter how hard the workload was I still had enough time just to meet up with some friends.*

*I would say this course has been a bit difficult to schedule everything. I can't go anywhere.*

This experience was countered somewhat by the student undertaking her course on a part time basis:

*My PG experience is very different to the UG experience – at UG level I was living at Uni, had 40 hours a week contact time and my whole life was being a student. This time around my main life is with my family at home and my part time work and part time studies are smaller parts – enjoyable and stimulating but I do not do them every single day.*

Two students found that they were struggling to keep up with the workload:

*There's so much reading to do and just preparing for lectures each week. I mean I was expecting it but it's got to the point where I'm just so behind on everything.*

*In all honesty, I am really struggling with university this time round. The work load is similar to what I was expecting, but I don't feel I am coping with it very well.*

One perceived that the workload was suitable:

*The amount of work usually feels about right. There was one term when we were given a lot of audio of old lectures to listen to and this was difficult as there were 6 hrs + at a time and when we listened to it a lot of it overlapped with current lectures but there was no way of knowing without listening to it all, which did take up a lot of time.*

Similarly, experiences of academic support differed. Two students were positive about the support they had received from their peers and staff and both of them mentioned a Facebook group for students on their course:

*I find I'm getting support from course mates. I've got some friends who are really on the ball with everything... I get help from them and we try and meet up sometimes when we have to revise for something or find something difficult, go through that. I personally don't really ask for support from my lecturers as much as I should do.*

*Staff are available by email so we can communicate on the days that I am not at Lincoln, and there is also a Facebook group for all of the students on the course, so that we can share and help each other remotely too. This is well used. The lecturers are approachable.*

One student felt that whilst they had asked for support from programme staff it had not been forthcoming:

*When I started to feel this bad a month ago after submitting an assessment I know was bad which I normally don't do that so I told them my course work was bad and I'm not feeling well mentally so [name] basically ignored me.*

However, they had been to see their GP and were being referred for counselling.

Experiences of feedback were positive in the main, although it might be that particular tutors' lack of communication might cause additional stress for some individuals:

*We have some practical sessions with [name] and these are very well staffed by [name] and other members of the team, so there is immediate feedback on performance. With the written/PowerPoint assignments the feedback is slightly briefer than I would like but is always returned in a timely manner.*

*Mine tends to be on time.*

One student expressed frustration at the speed with which she had received feedback thus far:

*I think the feedback depends on the tutor itself and not the university or anything so if they're extremely busy I'm not expecting the feedback. For example, the tutor I had from [location], apparently the moment [name] went to Court and such so [name] couldn't really feedback and read our reports straight away. [Name] took, I think it took around two months, I'm not sure but it was understandable. Others don't really say 'I'm really busy so you shouldn't expect your feedback by this time'... but they don't really communicate that.*

## **Group 2**

Students in receipt of the £1500 award were positive in the main about their academic study experiences. They acknowledged that whilst there had been times when they had felt under pressure, they were managing with their studies. They found PGT study was different to their UG experiences. The feedback that they received on their work was generally timely and constructive. While none of the students in this group had drawn on any university support services some had found their peers and staff supportive.

Participants were enjoying their PGT study experience although it had presented challenges in the form of multiple deadlines and the amount of work they had had to undertake. It was observed that workloads on their course (Forensic Anthropology) were dependent on which modules you had chosen:

*There were some rough moments but it's okay now.*

*There was one week when we had four things due in in the same week so that was quite stressful but that only did happen the once though.*

*I think it also depends on what modules you end up picking. There were some people on our course who managed to do a module before Christmas and got that one out of the way with everything else whereas we ended up having two extra modules after Christmas.*

The PGT experience differed because it involved more independent study than at UG level and students were willing to work harder:

*I think there's a lot more independent study at PG than there was at undergrad. At undergrad it was very much that you had learnt what they told you but here you have to find some stuff out yourself which is good because you're learning more.*

*We're willing to put more effort in on this course rather than the undergrad.*

Feedback on assignments was generally prompt and informative:

*Very good and prompt.*

*Yes we're still getting it and it's a good level and quantity.*

In their experience staff were supportive and approachable especially because there were fewer students on the PGT course making for a more intimate experience. Having good relationships with academic staff meant that the students felt able to discuss their workloads with them and possibly negotiate deadlines:

*They have more time for you I think than undergrad because there's so many people on an undergraduate course.*

*Good relationships with my tutors.*

*We tend to get a little bit of leeway though, we can talk to the staff and try and they try and co-operate with us, don't they? Especially if you know you've got quite a lot of deadlines, that's always been quite helpful.*

### Group 3

The 25 students in Group 3 were, generally, coping well with PGT study. However, they did identify a number of issues which made managing their PGT studies a challenge including being on a course that was new and having to study and work in a job. PGT study was seen as being quite different to UG study in terms of its intensity and the commitment required completing assignments, for example. Views on feedback varied widely – some students were very satisfied with their feedback whilst some participants were unhappy with its timeliness and quality. Some students had found course mates and staff supportive but had not really drawn on any university services. Suggestions for improved support included parity of status with PG research students including unlimited printer credits.

Most Group 3 students felt that they were just about coping with their PGT study but acknowledged that at times it was hard. One of the challenges was time management – adequately balancing their study commitments with other pressures. Some students spoke of the amount of preparation they had to do for their taught sessions in addition to assignments and other tasks and the reality that sometimes they just could not complete it all:

*I am now yes, at Christmas no I was burnout due to deadlines and ridiculous pressures. This second semester has been much more relaxed and I have the time to enjoy myself and carry out activities in conjunction with my degree.*

*In terms of the assessed work I've been alright with it but we have pre and post work for the lectures to prepare for the lecture. So to do the work for the lecture and keep on top of the work afterwards with my other work going on sometimes it's hard to keep on top of that and your deadline looming near you could do without the before and after.*

*Yes it's more intense. We've got three deadlines coming up on one day.*

*I have not had time to do many of the recommended extra exercises which would be beneficial for skill development, and my preparatory work for lectures is always rushed.*

Developing better organisational skills appeared to be the key to managing PG study and just sheer, hard work:

*It is difficult with working a part time job also but time management is vital!*

*Good time-management, breaking up work-loads instead of cramming everything into a short space of time.*

*I am not finding the work itself any harder but maybe the quantity has increased alongside having a part-time job to pay for accommodation etc., time is limited which I think is impacting my work and making it harder.*

Opinion was divided as to whether PGT study was different or similar to UG but most felt it was different because it required more independent learning and the relationship with staff was less like that of a teacher-pupil and more like colleagues:

*It is very different. Undergraduate was more about getting told what to read, what to learn and how to write each lab report. Postgraduate is more independent learning and time management, with more and longer assignments but less emphasis on lectures.*

*It's very different to undergraduate, especially the relationships with the tutors; it's far more chilled out.*

Interestingly those students who felt it was a similar learning experience also referred to independent learning:

*Very similar, it is not too much different to undergraduate, but there is more independence which I think is a good thing.*

*Similar. More independent work as expected.*

The opinions on feedback were probably the most varied. There were those who were very satisfied with the feedback they had received thus far as it contained constructive comments to help improve future performance. Some had found that revisiting comments was helpful in terms of developing their research and writing skills. The opportunity to discuss any feedback in person was also considered important:

*They're very good at giving it us on time. So if they've set a deadline giving us our feedback it will come.*

*Feedback has been handed back swiftly and has been very good in advising me on how to improve my mark.*

*Feedback is very good, and tutors are always very open to discuss anything with you if you wish for further feedback.*

*Feedback on time and in detail. Tutors are available to support.*

However, some students were less impressed with the amount of feedback they received and its timeliness. It was noted that there had been a problem with Turnitin resulting in the loss of marks for a particular module:

*Feedback has been prompt but some tutors have not provided very much feedback which can be frustrating as you then cannot see how you might improve next time etc.*



*With regards to feedback – I think this has been really rather limited. I would have liked to have gone through the exam taken in January, or at least had the opportunity to ask questions about it afterwards, as there were several questions I wasn't sure if I got right or not, or why a different answer might have been correct. I'm left not really knowing what I got right and what I didn't.*

*Virtually non-existent actually, for certain pieces of work.*

*Well the thing is the feedback when we've had it has been very good but there was a mishap with Turnitin so it meant that our biggest assignment which had actually been marked over a month ago didn't go up so we didn't get it.*

There was acknowledgement amongst some students in one of the Group 3 focus group sessions that some staff who are eminent in their field encountered a lot of demands on their time:

*Some of the tutors are really overloaded with work.*

*There have been bereavements in our faculty and they've still made it in for lectures for us. So they're incredibly dedicated but I suppose I would say the same thing, they've got so much to do and fitting in a face to face interaction with 28 individuals there's probably not enough hours in the day to do that.*

Students had to deal with a number of challenges in terms of managing their studies. Individuals who had jobs or who had returned to academia after a break and had family responsibilities, for example, found it hard to manage their commitments:

*I wouldn't say that I'm struggling...but I'm probably doing the bare minimum to get by because I work as well and... that takes up a lot of energy for me.*

*But obviously home life dictates really the amount of time I can spend and I work as well...*

*I am working part-time, and although I like my job, it is putting a strain on my MSc experience as I have very little time to focus on my uni work. I wish I didn't have to work alongside lectures as I feel that I am missing out on the full benefit of the course.*

#### *Group 4*

Most Group 4 participants had favourable experiences of academic feedback in terms of its timeliness, amount and helpfulness. This may be because many of the participants in this cohort are on different programmes:

*I think the feedback this year has been fantastic because there's only eleven of us. Real, in-depth comments.*

*Feedback is good; it helps more so when I critically evaluate my work first as is required for every piece submitted.*

However, some did have complaints as it might vary between staff on the same course; took a long time to come or was minimal:

*Feedback varies between staff. Some staff are very efficient others are useless.*

*Feedback hasn't been entirely brilliant either. Feedback is slow to receive and, when we do, very often minimal. I don't mind the time it takes to get it back to us so much, as I appreciate that my lecturers are busy people, but I don't like waiting a couple of months for less than a sentence worth of feedback.*

Similarly opinions of support amongst Group 4 participants were very different depending on the course they were on. Some students felt that course mates and lecturers were very supportive and some had drawn on their own personal networks of friends and family:

*There's 11 of us so it's quite easy for everyone to sit down and socialise and work together.*

In contrast, some students felt let down by staff:

*With my research project looming I feel unsupported from my supervisor as it is difficult to contact them.*

*I feel the lecturers could be a bit more supportive; or at least, understanding. We've been criticised on occasion for not doing extracurricular activities due to monetary issues, work commitments, etc., which I think is unfair. As long as we do everything that is compulsory for the course, then we shouldn't be penalised (or talked down to) for not engaging in extra activities, especially when, for the most part, the entire cohort finds them pointless and a waste of time.*

One student had made use of university support services and was grateful for the help they provided:

*The student support centre and the student wellbeing centre also have all been extremely helpful again and have definitely made it a little easier for me, even if it is just releasing some of the pressure on me to know that there is someone I can talk to if things do end up going badly.*

Suggestions for support included focussed on staff providing better feedback and more consistent and regular tutorial support.

Summary of the findings: differences and similarities

Students in all four groups were managing their PGT study but they were experiencing some problems. It was generally acknowledged that PGT study was different to the UG experience because it was more intense and involved a larger amount of self-directed learning. A lot of the students were experiencing these and other pressures of PGT study in spite of the financial relief the PEP scholarship brought with it particularly if they were working whilst studying. Expectations and experiences of academic feedback varied greatly; some students were very happy with what they received from staff whilst others were disappointed. Similarly, some students felt that staff were supportive whilst some did not. These differences of opinion emerged from within Groups 1, 3 and 4.

Question 3. Have you experienced any non-academic issues during your PGT studies?

Prompt: Money?

Prompt: Coping with student life?

Prompt: Travelling to university?

Prompt: Other commitments?

Prompt: Work-family?

Prompt: What helped you and what might have helped you?

*Group 1*

Amongst Group 1 participants the main non-academic issues was finance – having to pay tuition fees, accommodation and living costs:

*I'm basically surviving from my parents and it's difficult.*

*I would say money too. I managed to get a Barclays Career Development Loan but as soon as I got that, 80 per cent went on tuition fees, came straight out from that. I had to pay the other 20 on that I've got my next accommodation fees in April to pay from that. So by that time I'm not going to have much to live off until about August. So I'm pretty much relying on my parents as well.*

*I am paying for the course with the Professional and Career development loan, which despite applying for in July, only came through in February. So this has cause[d] a lot of stress with not being able to pay accommodation and tuition fees.*

For the student who studied part time, travelling into Lincoln and paying for parking was expensive. This was compounded by the limited places available for parking [as mentioned by Group 4, question 2]. This particular student also had childcare costs to cover:

*I commute to Lincoln for the day every Monday. This does incur a significant cost in petrol and childcare. I have also reduced my work hours to attend the course and study at home which has reduced my income.*

Student accommodation emerged as something of an issue because there appears to be a misalignment with university leases and the length of the MSc as this student explained:

*It does not help that accommodation's aren't taking into consideration postgrads, so we're doing research and our course ends around September and most of the contracts for accommodation end up in August so we don't really, you can put a bit more time on your contract but, for example, my accommodation in the second week of September this year they're going to take everyone out so they can clean the rooms for the next new tenants and I can only add five more weeks to my contract and I'm like, I submit my coursework in September and I have to discuss it in October I have to stay around but I can't really find a place that is just for a few weeks because there's none.*

*I was a bit surprised considering that the place I'm living in is for postgraduate and mature students we have to be out by the end of August as well.*

## Group 2

Amongst the four participants in Group 2 money was the main non-academic issue worrying PGT students. One of the students in this group was currently in employment whilst studying. Two students had worked prior to studying or in the holidays but had not carried on because they were unsure if they would be able to manage both study and employment whilst one had found she could not be as flexible as her employer wanted:

*To be fair most of the time it's flexible but I do it just to subsidise my Masters so I didn't have to take such a big loan out and hopefully at least try and repay it so I can get some saved up but most of the time that's spent within the month anyway on living costs.*

*I worked over the summer and saved up because I didn't want to have to sacrifice time on because I didn't know how much work there would be so I didn't want to commit to a job and then either my work suffered or something. It's coming to an end.*

Coping with student life was not perceived as a problem:

*It feels the same to me.*

Neither was travel an issue for Group 2 participants.

### Group 3

Money – the lack of it and the high costs involved in attending university and for those who work to fund their studies – the difficulty of fitting a job in were the main non-academic issues for Group 3 participants in spite of receiving a 60% scholarship:

*Yes, money has been a major factor this year for me. At undergraduate I was fortunate enough not to work with the availability of accommodation loans etc. However, now I live in rented accommodation with no external help other than my part-time job things are definitely tight.*

*Sometimes have to work more than I have time for in order to pay for my travelling to university.*

*I am beginning to worry about money and not having anything left at the end of the year limiting my options as to what I can do after my PGT course.*

*Money. I'm fed up of scabbing off my parents to be honest.*

*Money is becoming a slight issue mainly because I've been unable to find a part-time job.*

Students were working or borrowing money from their parents or in the form of a loan to fund their PGT studies. It was a balancing act as this participant highlighted:

*I just wanted to say that we've all got this scholarship and we're all still working and I would have had a big, big shock if I hadn't of got this scholarship and I don't know if I'd have made it through even with a job. So yes I think that is the biggest thing that even working 2 or 3 days a week isn't enough. You're almost thinking should I be putting more energy into that and just having enough money to stay afloat than I'm putting into the course which then makes you think what benefit am I actually getting out of doing this?*

In the main students felt that they were coping well with student life. Their engagement in it was dependent on whether they actually lived in Lincoln or commuted and whether they had had a break between UG and PG study. For PGT students living on campus/locally, there did not seem to be much change:

*Fine. I've not left education for the past however many years so it's just gone as it goes I don't know. Like I finished my undergrad in June and I started postgrad in September so it never really stopped. So I've not really had a problem with that. I just live the same life that I used to.*

*I still attend specific societies because I'm a council member of it.*

For some PGT students the fast pace of UG life and socialising was less attractive and/or possible now:

*I don't really have a student life I just stay at home. That's all I do.*

Students that commuted in just for the course didn't really have time to engage in student life:

*I don't really feel very engaged with student life as I'm only in Lincoln one day per week. I don't mind this though as feel I experienced student life well the first time round!*

*I would argue that I am not really a student, I don't feel like one, I treat this as a full time job and work plenty of hours to put the work quality in and gain the experiences and skills required.*

Other commitments were not really an issue for Group 3 participants, a few mentioned societies they attended but the main commitment outside of study for some of the group was paid work:

*Difficulties at work during busy times, having to work extra hours to support the store as I am a team leader plus having assignments to get written.*

Some were not able to see as much of their family as they would have liked because they did not have the time to visit them:

*I don't get to see as much of my family as I would like as they are in Yorkshire and I don't often have the time or money to travel back to see them.*

*I do miss my family. With the work load I find it hard to see them but I try my best to.*

Students have drawn on the support of family and friends at times as well as course mates. Two students detailed their positive experiences of using university support services when they felt anxious:

*Student Support's quite good. When I couldn't do my job anymore because I was quite stressed I would go there and have counselling sessions there and they were really supportive especially since they talk to so many students they can talk anecdotally as well.*

One of them argued that the university services available aren't promoted enough and that academic staff themselves seem unaware of them:

*I feel student support should be publicised more across the uni, emphasising that there should be no embarrassment in speaking to the student services.*

*So if tutors aren't going to know about them they're never going to be using them. If they were told more about it to recommend it.*

Again, greater availability of parking permits was emphasised by students:

*Parking has been the main issue as I haven't been allowed to get a student parking permit and the only place to park is the multi-storey NCP car park next to the Brayford which is rather expensive.*

#### Group 4

Although all ten Group 4 students had received a full scholarship many of them still experienced financial pressures:

*At the moment I'm okay but it's more reliant on my parents and obviously the scholarship's helped out a lot.*

*I have had monetary issues to an extent. I can afford what I need to (rent, food, etc..) but I am in my overdraft. Fortunately, I have support from my boyfriend, although I am applying for extra grants, etc., through the university.*

*Money is a constant worry. Having to work 25-30 hours a week to afford to travel to university as well as pay for other things including phone contract, gym membership and social events is not ideal. I am also currently paying off my overdraft as much as I can so I'm living on a constant budget.*

While many of the Group 4 participants expressed their appreciation in receiving a full scholarship, it had only alleviated some of their money worries:

*Although I received a full scholarship which I am extremely grateful for it does not aid me with day to day living. Therefore a part-time job becomes necessity straining my studies. Extra funding would help a number of people on the course and allow for improved focus and dedication to the course.*

One student spoke of the additional costs related to her MSc course;

*Money this year has been very tight with having to pay for a lot of learning materials and the overseas trip.*

Most of Group 4 had a job to supplement their income and it was sometimes a struggle to combine both work and study:

*Work are extremely inflexible and have made things harder for me but then again it is hard to find work around university and travelling days so I have to just grin and bear it.*

*I'm also working two part time jobs, which is difficult on top of my studies but is necessary.*

*That's what's good about my job that I pick my own shifts. So if I've got a busy week I just don't respond to any of the emails.*

Fitting in other commitments such as society membership was harder for some students than previously such was the intensity of the course combined with paid employment, for example:

*Parts of the course have affected my fitness and sporting commitments. Due to the long days at university and having to work as much as possible on my off days I find myself lacking time for the gym due to its opening hours.*

Similarly finding the time to see family could be hard:

*At some points throughout the year so far, it has been very stressful with the workload and plans to see family members have had to be cancelled or rearranged.*

*My family have also had to come second, meaning I have not been able to spend as much time (e.g. over Christmas) with them as I would normally have liked, due to my course commitments.*



For most of this group student life was enjoyable and for those who live locally, travel was not a concern. However, for a small number of students who commute, travelling to university was irritating and costly:

*Travelling to and from university can be irritating. I travel by train and the train times don't fit my schedule very well. Some days I'm at university for 11 hours and don't get home till 9:45pm. This can be a positive though as I make time for my workload.*

*Long commutes, petrol costs and a lack of parking at the university have all impacted on my welfare and studies, and arriving to lectures on time!*

Support had come from family and friends as well as staff. One participant suggested having someone to talk to would have been helpful whilst another who had accessed support suggested it was made available to students' off-campus. Parking was mentioned again:

*It would have helped me if I had someone I could have talked to at times, not a lecturer but someone just to listen and maybe offer some guidance on how to keep going, remain positive & focused.*

*My lecturers are very supportive if I couldn't make it in and offered to give me extra time outside of lectures to help me catch up. University parking would have been helpful seen as I am only in two days per week and travel a long way.*

#### Summary of the findings: differences and similarities

In response to question 3 which probed experiences of non-academic issues, across all four groups of students, money was the overriding concern. Even the students who had benefitted from a full fee scholarship were experiencing financial pressures having to pay for their accommodation, living and travel costs. For those who worked to help fund their MSc course and related costs, it was sometimes stressful fitting in work and study commitments. Additional costs incurred such as printing out reading materials and assignments and having to pay for parking were the most resented and parking permits for MSc students and unlimited printer credits were suggestions to alleviate these problems. A minority had drawn on university support services or staff but students weren't particularly aware of what was available to them.

Question 4.

*If you'd had a scholarship would it have made a difference?*

Group 1

All of the Group 1 participants felt that having a scholarship would have made a difference to their PGT experience. It was perceived that it would help alleviate some of the financial pressures studying incurred:

*It would reduce the impact of the reduced working hours, petrol, printing and childcare.*

A student who had experienced a delay in receiving her Career Development Loan argued that if she had had a scholarship, *"I wouldn't have been worrying about when the loan was going to come in"*.

*Has the scholarship made a difference to your ability to study at this level?*

#### *Group 2*

Group 2 participants had received £1500 towards their postgraduate study costs. They were all clear that it had made a difference - for some it had helped pay for a field trip and it had also helped alleviate some of the pressure the students faced:

*It meant I could go to Guatemala as well [field trip] and use my work money for that rather than saving up for my Masters fees and stuff like that.*

*Yes it's just made some of my outgoings a little bit less and it's taken some of the pressure off.*

*Yes, it has greatly helped financially.*

#### *Group 3*

For those in receipt of 60% of their course fees, the overwhelming sentiment was that the scholarship had made a big difference to their ability to study at this level:

*Yes, financially it has made a huge difference.*

*Yes most definitely, I am very grateful for having the opportunity to obtain one.*

*It has made a huge impact.*

*Yes absolutely, I think I feel exactly the same way, I'm not sure how I would have coped if I hadn't of gotten the scholarship.*

For a small number of students, without the scholarship they probably wouldn't have undertaken PGT study at all:

*I would have been unable to study this course at University of Lincoln and other costs for MSc courses at other Universities were too expensive.*

*I don't think I could afford to be on the course if it wasn't for the scholarship.*

*Without the scholarship I do not think I would have been able to undertake postgraduate study. I struggle to afford the monthly instalments for the reduced fee that I do pay so affording any more than this would have been impossible for me.*

Others felt that they would probably have still undertaken PGT study but they would have had to wait before doing so or they would have had to get a job and save up beforehand or borrow money. The process would have been more difficult without the scholarship:

*It wouldn't have been not wanting to but it could have made it near impossible, almost.*

*I probably would have delayed it.*

*It's definitely made a difference in terms of, I would have definitely have got a job somewhere. I've applied to quite a few places but I've been quite picky in terms of what I've applied to and the hours and the sort of work it is. I've worked in a few places where you're so drained by the end of the day that you don't want to, you can't physically do anything else.*

*I think I would have had to rely on my parents a lot more if I hadn't got the scholarship which makes me feel really guilty. I don't like borrowing money off my Mum and Dad. So it would have been mainly funded by them and me trying desperately to pay them back as quickly as possible.*

*I would have needed to get more of the loan than I actually ended up getting. I would have had to ask for the full amount so obviously that would have taken much longer to pay off.*

*I could have found the money to pay for the course, but it would have made this year even more of a struggle. I had a breakdown at Christmas due to the workload and exam pressure and didn't think I could go on. If I hadn't had the scholarship and had to work even more hours, I think the pressure would have pushed me over the edge and I may not have been able to continue with the course. In fact, going by how 'broken' I felt at Christmas and utterly exhausted, I know I couldn't have handled any other pressures.*

The alumni discount was seen as an important factor in helping make the decision to study at the University of Lincoln:

*I wouldn't have even been able to consider it without that in the first place.*

#### Group 4

The 100% fees scholarship had made a dramatic difference to Group 4 participants which was evident in the language they used to refer to it – 'most definitely', 'massive difference', 'it has made all the difference', 'masses of difference', 'huge difference for me' and 'huge weight lifted off my shoulders'.

The scholarship had helped alleviate some financial worries and most of this group felt that they wouldn't have undertaken PGT study without it or without incurring huge debts:

*The scholarship has made a massive difference to me, because without it I would certainly not [have] been able to study the course.*

*The scholarship has made a huge difference for me and has enabled me to actually do a Masters, as otherwise I would not have been able to afford it.*

*Without it I could not afford to be on the course without taking out a loan and acquiring debts. It is crucial to me and I am extremely grateful for it!*

*The scholarship has made a massive difference. I'm not sure I'd be able to afford to study if not for the scholarship, at least not without having significantly more financial issues.*

#### Summary of the findings: differences and similarities

All the students who had received some contribution towards their course fees through PEP agreed that it had made a difference to their ability to study at this level. Indeed, based on prior literature and the findings of the ESS it would have been surprising if we had found otherwise. For those in receipt of the smaller amount - £1500, it had meant opportunities such as an overseas field trip could be taken up. Even students in receipt of a partial scholarship (60% of their course fees) spoke about how important it had been in helping them decide to study and perhaps, without it, they may not have been able to study. Group 4 students described the dramatic difference having their fees paid had made to them – many of this group felt without it they would not be at the University of Lincoln. In spite of the PEP scholarships the students still struggled financially and willingly used their own savings or secured additional funds from other means. All of the

Group 1 participants who had not received any financial assistance felt that having a scholarship would have made a big difference to their PGT experience.

*Question 5. Is your course preparing you for the future?*

Prompt: If yes how?

Prompt: If not, should it?

Prompt: How could it be improved? (PhD, career prospects and employers expectations).

#### *Group 1*

The four Group 1 students were confident that their course was preparing them for the future in many respects:

*For me, the course is really helping my future as it has rounded out the area of my current career that I needed to develop. I have been able to use my new knowledge back in my job from week 1.*

*Yes I believe it is. The semester we have a module that is basically gearing us up to working in practice in "real life"; so we look at case histories from past cases and discuss diagnosis and the various treatment options that would be suitable.*

However, there was some concern particularly amongst two students that they would still be lacking in practical experience when it came to looking for a job:

*I'm not expecting to leave this course and say 'yes I'm capable to do everything'. I know what to do in my area but when they look at my education they will say 'you don't have any experience' so I'm expecting to end up in lab before I can go to the place I want.*

*It kind of is. With my course it's expected that we can just kind of start our own businesses as animal behaviourists but I don't feel like I have the experience. We do some practical work but not much for my course and I think that since I graduate from this I'm still going to have to work for someone to get experience and I don't have the money to start my own business up either.*

*One thing I think could improve it is something that used to be offered – a business module, or at least have someone come to talk to us about setting up your own business.*

*This used to be offered and one of the things that attracted me to the course. But I arrived in September to be told they had cut that aspect of the course!!*

Volunteering opportunities with companies were mentioned with a view to gaining practical experience.

All four students articulated concerns about career paths post-course. Observations about university support for employment included availability of jobs in certain areas such as business but nothing advertised by the university was of relevance to their courses:

*We go to the website of the university with the careers and the jobs they have like internships. You'll see it's for marketing, technologies, engineering and so on.*

Interestingly while one student detailed how being on the MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour had helped re-invigorate her career and helped her secure a promotion, she observed that for others on the course without a veterinary background there didn't seem to be a clear career path:

*However, the majority of the students on the MSc course are not veterinary surgeons so do not have a clear career path. I do not feel that there has been a great emphasis on future career prospects for these students and I do wonder what so many people will go on and do after completing this course.*

Indeed this worry was articulated by another student:

*I'm just hoping that by having this masters it will help me get a job with animal, kind of, training or animal behaviour just so that I can get some more experience to then in a few years' time maybe start my own business up. But straightaway it's not, I don't think.*

## **Group 2**

All four students in Group 2 were studying MSc Forensic Anthropology and were all confident that their course was preparing them for the future. They felt that the overseas field trip, for example, was a real advantage:

*Definitely, especially with jobs on our Lincoln Blackboard thing, they actually post jobs and it's the only course in the UK that offers the overseas module so that's definitely going to set us apart from people in Dundee and places like that. I think all of the extracurricular stuff like volunteering and the extra trips and that just gives you more... transferable skills and things.*

In addition, having specialist staff delivering their course was important in relation to their future employability:

*I think it's good that our lecturers are experts in the field as well.*

*And they're training us to be on their level.*

They were also confident that staff would support them in providing references for potential employers and whilst staff had said it was the responsibility of students to search for jobs themselves they felt confident that staff would help them if they needed it:

*They have said it's our responsibility to go and look for internships and jobs but then they would be willing to provide references.*

*They will advise how to find them although it's up to us to actually search for them. They will help on what to search for.*

The only suggested improvement was for “more modular options” whilst one student was very complimentary about their course and said:

*Keep the staff. I couldn't big them up enough. They've been great with support and everything so I think the course will only get better especially as it's only our first year. The way they've had to manage it has been brilliant, I think.*

### Group 3

The Group 3 cohort included students on the MSc Biotechnology, MSc Forensic Anthropology, MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour and MSc Sport Science. Almost all of them felt that their course was preparing them for the future suggesting that this is not related to discipline but about the careers students' perceive themselves moving into:

*Yes! It is preparing me for everything in the field. I can't explain how brilliant it is. It is taught by experts who have been working in the field for many years and can share their experiences with us to prepare us for almost anything. Thanks to the MSc I feel confident about my career choice and despite the challenges involved with it, I now feel like I can handle whatever it throws at me.*

*Yes, most of the course is aimed at a practical-'real-world' examples and how everything comes together in industry. Feel very competent that I can start in industry following this MSc.*

*Without a doubt it prepares you more thoroughly than I ever thought it would. Particularly into going into a research or industry based career.*

For Forensic Anthropology students, their future career skills were enhanced by the opportunity to attend an overseas field trip:

*With this field school I think it's probably going to be the best experience that we can actually get before being in some kind of career.*

*We go on a lot of field trips as well don't we to different countries.*

Students from all four courses spoke about the high calibre of the staff teaching on their courses and how staff's knowledge would benefit them in terms of their subject knowledge and their contacts:

*Our lecturers, our main lecturers, are functioning in their field.*

*One of our lecturers is the second highest ranking in her field in the entire country.*

*They use their links and their influences to help us out.*

*They're so helpful as well aren't they? They'll put you in contact with people.*

*One of the lecturers is the only certified animal behaviourist in the whole of the UK with professor status but you know the other lecturers are researchers in their own right and authors and all of that jazz.*

Acquiring skills on their courses was seen as something which would help with future career choices whether in employment or further study. They included presentation skills, group work, time management and research skills:

*I am learning very valuable skills which are required in industry and various potential work places. Key skills such as presenting, team work and time managements in addition to various practical procedures in Biotechnology such as tissue culture, fermentation etc.*

*Yes, it is giving me skills that I will need in my future career.*

*I feel I would like to get into research and so the thesis and several of the assignments are helping as they are tailored towards experimental design, balanced arguments, literature researching etc. It would also be preparing me very well if I chose to work as a behaviour clinician.*



Students on the MSc Biotechnology course discussed how they were developing skills they could utilise in employment as well as time dedicated to CV writing and job applications:

*We do a lot of problem based learning work which is actually a big part of it so stuff like we had to present a poster but not a scientific poster it was a commercial poster to pitch an idea to a CEO so things like that and problem based learning stuff where you've got to work as a team to overcome a problem and it's like, you can do it however you want as long as it works. It's really sort of suited to industry that is.*

*We've had two whole modules on professional skills, the sort of stuff like writing CVs, interviews – we've done mock interviews.*

Some students noticed that there were benefits to be had from studying at MSc level with others from different academic backgrounds helping to give a richer learning experience:

*Because on our course you get so many people from so many different backgrounds you've got ones that have come from undergraduate you've got vets, vet nurses, there's one woman who was a journalist, there's other people that already own their own businesses and stuff. There's so many different backgrounds that I think they've mixed it up so that we can learn from each other.*

Two participants in Group 3 were unclear how their course was preparing them for the future. This was because their course was very specifically geared towards individuals wishing to set up their own consultation business and the students were not confident that they were equipped with the skills to do this at that stage (March 2015). In particular they were worried about the process of certification:

*I mean I think I knew that going in and was hoping it would channel me towards that but it's probably just left me thinking that may not be for me, not without 20 years of experience before I feel like I can work confidently in that field.*

*I think for us the whole thing about becoming certified is such a big issue and I do think it's something that they should tell us about at the start of the course so it's something we can be working on throughout the year.*

However, another student detailed how this approach suited her perfectly, precisely because she was in the process of setting up her own business:

*I am learning so much from the course which I can directly apply to the day care. The course is giving me the skills and confidence I feel is needed to run a hands on doggy business!*

Suggested improvements by Group 3 participants focussed on dedicating more time to careers information and advice relating to both employment and further study:

*Career prospects could be improved, we haven't been offered the chance to sit down and discuss future plans.*

*It could be improved by discussing career prospects more.*

*It would be beneficial if more advice and help was available for PhD study as now I am concerned as to how I will reach the next part of my career path if I do not obtain a scholarship similar to this year. If more options were available like this scholarship I believe even more people would stay on in education for longer.*

#### Group 4

Positive outcomes were on the minds of Group 4 participants who perceived their MSc course had provided them with experience, relevant skills and knowledge:

*Yes this course gives a lot of hands-on/field experience.*

*Yes, having a Masters enables me to get a career in the chosen field and also enables me to gain a PhD later on.*

*Providing me with skills and knowledge to further my career.*

*Definitely! I plan to use the skills I am being taught on my career when I graduate. The practical elements have allowed me to see how easy or hard it is to implement training plans for owners and pets, which gives me invaluable experience for when I am actually training pets professionally. Although I obviously need more experience, but it has prepared me greatly so far. There are plenty of research projects for students to get involved with as well at the university which is a fantastic opportunity.*

Reference was made to the calibre of staff and the reputation of the university in relation to moving on in the future:

*I also think specifically for my area having the name behind you just the fact that it's Lincoln it is one of the worlds' leading places and most people in the industry have heard of Lincoln.*

Some students had received practical careers help such as interview preparation while speakers from industry had come in to the university:

*Yes, for a future in the scientific field, interview preparation etc.*

*We've had... two external speakers come in one from Anglian Water and one from Fujifilm BioSynth up in Northumbria somewhere who make all medicines so that's really helped us all in terms of getting to speak to someone who'd done what we've done – a Bachelors, Masters, PhD and then gone into industry. So the career prospects are good in terms of getting first hand point of view on it.*

*We have had people coming in to talk to us about different things and from different accreditation bodies but we've got the Behaviour Clinic on site so we have the opportunity to see exactly what it's like if we were going to run our own business but still get the background for if we were going to present ourselves and work for a different company.*

*Yes definitely my course this year. [Name] is doing a terrific job with scientific knowledge and preparing you for such things as interviews. I had a PhD interview yesterday and I used a lot of the skills that I'd learnt in a module last semester and utilised that in the application and the interview which is brilliant because it's not just the science, being fed information but developing yourself as a scientist, a researcher and as a potential employable person. So I think it's brilliant.*

Two students expressed some doubts about moving forwards in their chosen careers:

*Yes I believe so however there is growing concern over a career forming at the end of the course as jobs are scarce and hard to come by. The content is good to some extent however some modules fail to challenge me or feel worthwhile.*

*The course says it is preparing us for the future, by being more career orientated than other courses in this field, but I don't feel it is. The vital knowledge I need for the field has been rather lacking. I know about a lot of sub areas of the career path before me, but not a lot about the core facts, which I find troubling. Furthermore, I feel the course is setting us up for one particular career/future, rather than realising as a cohort, our futures are varied. I'm not even sure I want to stay in this field, so I don't need to be taught how the do the career, but actually learning the subject thoroughly could prove useful in future. It's like teaching someone how to be an accountant without ever teaching them the maths.*

Suggested improvements include a session or events on career and employment options:

*More links to possible employers and internship opportunities allowing us to develop knowledge and skills in the field and also get a good idea of possible careers. Also more*

*practical skills that would help us in the future and qualifications in such subjects as phlebotomy, first aid, strength and conditioning etc.*

*They could tell us more about setting up on our own and what the benefits are of the different organisations (they do have one planned in April but it would be better nearer the start of the course so that we can be planning our next steps).*

*More help would be appreciated with furthering my education and career opportunities.*

*A few events regarding employability in the science sector would have been helpful, but this is something we can always do ourselves anyway....but would have helped I think.*

*It would help if there could be a seminar that talks about the opportunities that may be available to master's students, and where you can look for suitable opportunities etc.*

#### Summary of the findings: differences and similarities

Students across all four groups felt that studying an MSc was preparing them for the future as it gave them the opportunity to develop their skills in a specific subject area. Students whose courses included practical skills development such as writing a CV and support and information on career and employment opportunities were especially positive that their MSc represented real added value. There were a few concerns expressed about trying to get a job post MSc without having enough relevant practical experience and some students would have liked more information and advice about volunteering opportunities and employment and careers generally.

## Summary

The 44 students who engaged in this stage of the PEP research revealed that they were motivated to undertake Masters level study to develop their skills in a specific subject area in order to improve their career prospects. Many of them were University of Lincoln alumni who felt happy remaining at the institution. Many students were enticed back by the reputation of specific academic staff on their courses, the facilities on offer, the reputation of the university and the alumni discount.

Students in all four groups were generally managing their PGT studies well but some were experiencing problems and noted the pressures of PGT study. Expectations and experiences of academic feedback varied greatly as did perceptions of the support given by staff. Many students drew on support from their course mates which was facilitated by smaller group sizes.

Money was the greatest non-academic concern even amongst the students who had benefitted from a full fee scholarship. For those who worked to help fund their MSc course and related costs, it was sometimes exhausting fitting in both work and study

commitments. Additional costs such as printing and parking were frequently mentioned and it felt that there was some disparity in status between PG taught and PG research students since the latter had unlimited printing credits and could obtain a parking permit. A small number of students had drawn on university support services to help them during their studies.

All the students who had received some contribution towards their course fees through PEP agreed that it had made a difference to their ability to study at this level. Indeed, many of them felt that without the scholarship they would not have been able to study at this level at all.

## 5. Case studies of sustainable good practice to support masters' applicants and students

### Key points

This activity was designed to address the issues arising out of the data. Each institution was required to develop practical initiatives to address any pressing issues their findings produce with a budget of £15,000 of which the institutional contribution was £5,000 and £10,000 came from the Postgraduate Support Scheme.

It was a requirement of the project that any initiative developed is sustainable by the institution post project, and used to develop initiatives that provide a range of academic and non-academic support to PGT students across the different transitions (e.g. admissions, pre-arrival, induction and preparing students to leave). It was agreed that the programme leaders involved in PEP could have funds of up to £3000 to utilise to develop initiatives responding to the issues emerging from PEP. As of July 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 three programmes had used this funding and their sustainable initiatives are detailed here.

### Case studies

#### Case study 1

Name and University
MSc Biotechnology at the University of Lincoln.
Title of project/ initiative
Tablets for the interactive classroom.
Who was involved in the initiative
Dr. Enrico Ferrari and Dr. James Flint.
Reason for the project/ initiative
We decided to purchase Android tablets to use with MSc Biotechnology students so that we can tailor the course to use more interactive assets.
Why it was developed
If the all class has a tablet available, the lecturer can make use of interactive elements during lectures (papers, videos or other resources online) linked to the already existing e-learning environment or to quick response (QR) codes in

<p>PowerPoint slides and posters.</p> <p>Tablets with reference manager software, such as Mendeley, provide a valid alternative to printed papers, which are a particularly important resource for research intensive courses such the MSc Biotechnology.</p>
<p>The target group</p> <p>Students on the MSc Biotechnology at present and those in the future.</p>
<p>How it was developed, what it included and how it was implemented.</p> <p>The initiative consisted of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Identification of a suitable and cost effective model of tablet.</li><li>2. Purchase of 20 tablets that will be given to students for their use for the duration of the course.</li><li>3. Initialisation and encryption of the tablets performed by ICT department to adhere to internal regulations about data storage.</li><li>4. Inclusion of suitable interactive material in the course lectures.</li></ol> <p>The latter is still ongoing, although several elements were present already in the course but not every student had access to them.</p>
<p>The cost and timeline</p> <p>The initiative cost was £3,052.32 (of which £52.32 came from the School budget) and started on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2015. It will end with obsolescence of the tablets.</p>
<p>How it is/was monitored</p> <p>We ask for feedback on resources from students for the subject boards. We are particularly interested in monitoring their satisfaction with regards to reading papers in this way, as in the past we found that their printing credit was largely insufficient for the amount of material they tend to read (this emerged in the PEP focus groups as well). We want to verify whether the availability of tablets will mitigate this problem.</p>

<p>The outcome or expected outcome</p> <p>Increased variety and availability of material provided during lectures, with easy accessibility that encourages further consultation beyond the classroom.</p> <p>Better management of the scientific literature relevant to the subject.</p>
<p>Has or could the initiative be used for a different group?</p> <p>The initiative seems to be suitable for groups other than the MSc Biotechnology students but has not been implemented outside this yet.</p>
<p>Advice and guidance</p> <p>For an interesting overview of the approach and some background please read this paper: Luisa Sevillano-García, M., Vázquez-Cano, E. (2015) The impact of digital mobile devices in higher education. <i>Educational Technology and Society</i> 18 (1), pp. 106-118.</p>
<p>Contact details</p> <p>Dr. Enrico Ferrari</p> <p><a href="mailto:eferrari@lincoln.ac.uk">eferrari@lincoln.ac.uk</a></p> <p>Dr. James Flint</p> <p><a href="mailto:jflint@lincoln.ac.uk">jflint@lincoln.ac.uk</a></p>

## Case study 2

<p>Name and University</p> <p>MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour at the University of Lincoln.</p>
<p>Title of project/ initiative</p> <p>Behaviour Modification Training: A Video Resource For Practitioners.</p>



<p>Who was involved in the initiative</p> <p>Dr. Helen Zulch MRCVS.</p>
<p>Reason for the project/ initiative</p> <p>To provide AV resources assisting students on the course detailing techniques when practice is not possible.</p>
<p>Why it was developed</p> <p>As future practitioners in the field of Clinical Animal Behaviour, students need to understand how to perform a range of behaviour modification techniques. In addition they need to be able to explain this to owners of pets with problem behaviour. There is not time during the course to cover all of these techniques in detail and when in practice it is not always possible (due to a range of constraints) to demonstrate essential procedures with a patient. There is currently no suitable audio visual resource to take the place of live practice for our students both during their studies and after they graduate. This resource will fill this need.</p>
<p>The target group</p> <p>Students on the MSc Clinical Animal Behaviour at present and those in the future.</p>
<p>How it was developed, what it included and how it was implemented.</p> <p>A range of useful behaviours have been identified by the team running the Animal Behaviour Referral Clinic and this list has been passed to a previous student who still works closely with the University of Lincoln but who now has her own business with the resources to undertake this work using the methodologies as we teach them on our course. In conjunction with the clinic team, story boards for the behaviours are being developed and she will then film the training of the behaviours and also put together PDF documents describing the training protocols in detail. This material will be handed back to the clinic team for final editing and writing to DVD. Examples of behaviours to be included (the list will be prioritised according to the time which we can pay for on our budget) follow:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Mat training</li><li>2) Loose lead walking</li><li>3) Hand touch</li></ol>

<p>4) Watch me</p> <p>5) Self Control exercises</p> <p>6) Self settle</p> <p>7) Give</p> <p>8) Leave</p> <p>9) Recall</p> <p>10) Say Hello / Say Goodbye</p> <p>11) Desensitisation and Counterconditioning around dogs.</p>
<p>The cost and timeline</p> <p>£3000 – DVDs ready for distribution to current cohort and new intake before the middle of October 2015. Future cohorts will be given the DVDs during induction week, however it will take the whole of the summer 2015 to get these produced this year.</p>
<p>How it is/was monitored</p> <p>Both the current cohort, who have gone through the course without the benefit of this resource (but who will receive it prior to their completion of the course), as well as the new cohort who will receive the material early in their academic year for support through the course, will be asked to complete a short survey regarding the usefulness of the resource, how they have experienced its benefits and how they perceive that it may benefit them once they are in practice. In addition they will be surveyed regarding additional material and information they would recommend we include in any future iterations of the resource which we may be able to develop in future.</p>
<p>The outcome or expected outcome</p> <p>Students who, when they leave us, feel better equipped to implement and teach these techniques in their future careers.</p>
<p>Has or could the initiative be used for a different group?</p> <p>The material can be put on the clinic website for use by clients (via a link emailed</p>

to them) or potentially made freely available as an open resource to the wider public via our website. A decision regarding whether or not we make use of these options has not yet been made. At the very least it will be used as a resource by the clinic team during consultations.

Contact details

Dr. Helen Zulch

[hzulch@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:hzulch@lincoln.ac.uk)

### Case study 3

Name and University

MSc Sport Science at the University of Lincoln.

Title of project/ initiative

Sport Science Laboratory Protocol Videos.

Who was involved in the initiative

Dr. Sandy Willmott, Senior Lecturer, School of Sport and Exercise Science, College of Social Science and Programme Leader, MSc Sport Science.

Reason for the project/ initiative

Given the limited amount of time that PGT students are often able to spend on campus outside of scheduled sessions, it is important to maximise the learning benefit during those sessions. This is especially true for practical data collection that can only be undertaken within a laboratory setting.

Why it was developed

The provision of a series of videos demonstrating correct practice in using physiological and biomechanical testing equipment will have many benefits for the students. Videos can be watched ahead of the first session as preparation, and they can be viewed after in-person demonstrations to help reinforce the learning and provide clarification and as a resource to support subsequent independent use of the equipment by students.

It was anticipated that student confidence in using the testing equipment would be

<p>improved and that they would obtain the required level of competence more rapidly and with greater independence.</p> <p>The same AV equipment could be used by students to record themselves using the laboratory protocols, as well as other programme activities such as student-led workshops and debates. The resultant videos would be a valuable resource for informing student reflection and, with relevant student permission, for discussion with future cohorts.</p>
<p>The target group</p> <p>Current and future students on the MSc Sport Science.</p>
<p>How it was developed, what it included and how it was implemented.</p> <p>(1) The activity centred on purchasing some AV equipment for use by staff and students associated with the MSc Sport Science. Poor audio quality is a particular issue with the cameras typically found in a sport science setting, and flexible, high-quality options were included in this area.</p> <p>The equipment purchased included:</p> <p>Panasonic Lumix DMC GH4 Digital Camera</p> <p>Panasonic Lumix G X Vario 12-35mm f/2.8 Asph. Lens</p> <p>Velbon DF-61 Heavy Duty Aluminium Photo/Video Tripod</p> <p>RØDE VideoMic Pro Compact Directional On Camera Microphone</p> <p>Blue Microphones Yeti USB Microphone.</p> <p>(2) Staff were given instruction on the equipment's use by the College's media content developers. Staff will provide the same guidance to the students, with media developer support where necessary.</p>
<p>The cost and timeline</p> <p>Grand Total: £1929.90. The equipment was ordered and arrived in June 2015 ready for the students and staff to start using it this summer.</p>
<p>How it is/was monitored</p>

(1) The AV equipment is held by the Programme Leader who will make it available to the programme's staff and students, as required.

(2) Potential uses for the equipment will be discussed with the students, and feedback will be gathered from the latter concerning the usefulness of the videos themselves and the process of their production.

#### The outcome or expected outcome

(1) At the start of laboratory-based modules, students will be provided with a DVD containing relevant instructional videos. Feedback will be requested from students after use and refinements made for later cohorts, if needed. The library of available resources should increase each year.

(2) Students will be encouraged to record their own videos of laboratory and other programme activities. These will be of immediate use for student reflection and, with relevant permission, may be used with later cohorts to stimulate discussion.

#### Has or could the initiative be used for a different group?

While the main focus of this initiative is laboratory equipment use, the same benefits for supporting the student learning experience would be expected in almost any discipline. The flexibility of the equipment and the freedom for students to explore their own ideas means that the project is not limited to the initial staff plans.

#### Advice and guidance

Whilst the production of AV resources of this kind is not novel in itself and many technologies such as smartphones can be used, we feel that the key features for maximising the benefits from this initiative are (a) the high-quality of the recordings and (b) the ability for this equipment to be used by programme staff and students, rather than being reliant on external experts. This enables rapid and flexible response to student needs.

Students will be encouraged to make further use of the equipment for programme-related activities, and the nature of the equipment means that they will be able to produce videos for all quality levels from social media to professional.

#### Contact details

Dr. Sandy Willmott

[swillmott@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:swillmott@lincoln.ac.uk)

## Summary

The initiatives developed at the University of Lincoln so far have been in response to some of the issues which emerged from the survey and focus group data. For example, many of the students were unhappy about the large amounts of articles they were required to print off and the cost involved and the Android tablets in Biotechnology respond to this issue as well as providing students with the opportunity to use a tablet in the classroom. Participants also discussed the intensity of their study and the initiative developed by Clinical Animal Behaviour is one response to this giving students the opportunity to view essential animal behaviour procedures in place of live practice during their studies and as a refresher after they graduate. Similarly, the initiative developed by Sport Science with the provision of a series of videos demonstrating correct practice in using physiological and biomechanical testing equipment will have many benefits for the students. Students may watch the clips ahead of the first session as preparation, and they can be viewed after in-person demonstrations to help reinforce the learning and provide clarification and as a resource to support subsequent independent use of the equipment by students.

## 6. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

This report can only be the first step in a process of learning from the wealth of data produced by the Postgraduate Experience Project. It is clear just from the data in this report (which does not include the two additional pieces of research conducted at the University of Lincoln) that there is much to be learned. This first report has been focused on ensuring that the data produced in response to each of the questions posed by the wider project team have been answered and that there is sufficient analysis of the data for the project lead and researcher to draw conclusions regarding the whole project. However, at this stage of the presentation and analysis of data we think the following conclusions can be drawn.

*In relation to the funding of students on PGT STEM programmes:*

- a) That there is clear evidence that students, programmes (and the sciences on which they are based), universities and geographical regions really benefit from the type of investment in programmes that was facilitated through PEP. Students, who could not have studied without the funding, participated. Initial indications at the allocation stage that funding has a significant influence on students' decision making were confirmed in the focus groups where they overwhelmingly indicated that they would not have been able to participate without the funding. Those who would have participated even if they had not had funding were able to commit more of their time and efforts to the programme and benefit more widely from it. Programmes that would not have been able to run or get started were supported and this should help with future growth and reputation. This in turn means that a wider range of geographical locations are able to participate in and benefit from the sciences underpinning PGT STEM programmes. And, it is believed that initial investment will provide a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce that will act as an example and a stimulus within the region.
- b) That businesses and employers cannot stimulate their employees to participate in PGT STEM and benefit from funding until they have a sufficiently qualified employee base (i.e. people with undergraduate qualifications).
- c) That universities in regions without good transport links and without businesses underpinned by skilled workforces need more financial support if they are to play a role in regenerating areas.
- d) That students supported with fee scholarships still have to make significant financial sacrifices and efforts in order to participate in PGT STEM programmes. The money comes from savings, family support and private loans. Even small amounts of funding support can be critical in enabling people to participate or not.
- e) That students who are more financially challenged, struggle to participate in activities which may help them gain employment – especially if these activities are extracurricular and cost money (directly or indirectly e.g. they incur childcare costs).

f) Providing funding support does help widen access but in contexts like Lincoln where it is a recruiting university it is not a structured or targeted activity as getting sufficient people onto the programme is the key focus. Those wider social processes which result in particular STEM subjects being taken up by specific social groups are possibly more determining.

g) Being a graduate of the University of Lincoln was very important in influencing who applied for the PEP scholarships – this implies that universities with a reputation for widening access at undergraduate level are more likely to be able to diversify the student body.

h) Students are more likely to be stressed by finance than any other aspect of their life outside of university.

*In relation to teaching and student support:*

a) Students have high expectations regarding what they will get in terms of student support. The specifics of what they expect and want is very much tied to who they hope to become as a consequence of taking a specific Masters programme. For example, those wanting research careers want to be supported to develop independent research skills and those wanting to set up small businesses would like to learn how to do this.

b) Students pick their programmes for the knowledge, the skills (which they think will make them employable at the start of their programme), the expertise of their teachers, the reputation of the university or programmes along with factors of convenience (like proximity or it is a university they are familiar with from undergraduate programmes) and their expectations regarding knowledge were mostly met.

c) Where students' desire for specific knowledges were not met it seemed that this was either because their own understanding of what they needed changed or the programme did not incorporate modules with specific skills or knowledges. This suggests that students could sometimes do with more information regarding careers and possibilities at the beginning of their programmes. Or alternatively they could do with more flexible Masters programmes whereby they can pick additional modules from within a university (e.g. a module from Business or Journalism) or perhaps even across universities.

d) Students expected clear and lengthy feedback on how to improve their work which they would like delivered in writing or by tutors in person with a very quick turn-around. Where feedback was slower than expected or was not helpful in pointing out ways to improve students were disappointed.

e) Students expected to have close relationships with students and as they went through the course they commented that they liked the more egalitarian relationship they had. This was linked to their becoming more autonomous learners. Where this did not work



students seemed to be on larger courses where there was less possibility of them developing one-to-one relationships.

f) Students get upset and stressed when they do not feel they are being adequately supported.

g) Students also have trouble fitting their work in and have difficulty with time management. There are particular forms of assessment and particular structuring of assessment practices which exacerbate this.

*In relation to feeling that they are gaining employability skills:*

a) Students have different understandings of what they need to make them employable because they have varying ambitions.

b) Students start their courses feeling they will become employable but as they progress some start to doubt this. This may be linked to them developing a clearer sense and understanding of what they need through the knowledge they gain on the programme.

c) Different programmes relate differently to an employability agenda and this is not always clear for students. Most are aimed at students with different ambitions. It is therefore unlikely they will meet all students' needs to the same degree and much of this depends on prior experience.

d) Students are disappointed when they do not feel they are being offered opportunities that they think will make them employable but we need to dig further into all of the data to find out why they are feeling this way.

e) Students would like personalised careers advice and support.

f) Students expect that the university will advertise jobs that are suitable for them when they leave through their careers service. They are pleased when this happens and feel let down when it doesn't.

### **Key Recommendations**

1) That funding support is provided to help students, universities and regions like Lincoln to grow their knowledge and skills base.

2) That the University of Lincoln consider a variety of forms of delivery (off-site, blended learning etc.) in order to encourage people onto their courses from a wider geographical area and make them sustainable.

- 3) That clear rationale and expectations regarding feedback are articulated to students and staff and that there is consistency.
- 4) That students are given personal tutors or careers advisors who engage with them at regular intervals throughout the year around their ambitions and plans and support them to select modules and experiences that are relevant to them.
- 5) That there is an explicit acknowledgement of the stress that students suffer with regard to finance and that students are clear that financial guidance is available.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – variables q.50 with q.49

Correlations												
			50. Thinking about your concerns, how anxious/nervous are you? Select one option	49.1 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Coping with the standard of work	49.2 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Getting involved in university life	49.3 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Making friends	49.4 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Managing my money	49.5 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Looking for suitable accommodation	49.6 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Looking after my health and welfare	49.7 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Coping with the travelling to university	49.8 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Coping with balancing life demands and study	
Spearman's rho	50. Thinking about your concerns, how anxious/nervous are you? Select one option	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.358**	-.375**	-.348**	-.254	-.212	-.422**	-.224	-.385**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.008	.006	.011	.066	.127	.002	.107	.004	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.1 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Coping with the standard of work	Correlation Coefficient	-.358**	1.000	.380*	.388*	.334*	.827	.227	.119	.403**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.008	.029	.025	.014	.850	.102	.398	.003	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.2 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Getting involved in university life	Correlation Coefficient	-.375**	.380*	1.000	.816**	.156	.167	.372**	.301*	.337*	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.006	.029	.000	.285	.232	.006	.029	.014	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.3 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Making friends	Correlation Coefficient	-.348**	.388*	.816**	1.000	.175	.357**	.360**	.284*	.421**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.011	.025	.000	.210	.009	.008	.008	.002	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.4 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Managing my money	Correlation Coefficient	-.254	.334*	.156	.175	1.000	-.077	.150	-.116	.438**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.066	.285	.210		.583	.283	.407	.001	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.5 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Looking for suitable accommodation	Correlation Coefficient	-.212	.827	.167	.357**	-.077	1.000	.404**	.361**	.101	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.127	.232	.009	.583		.003	.008	.473	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.6 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Looking after my health and welfare	Correlation Coefficient	-.422**	.227	.372**	.360**	.150	.404**	1.000	.581**	.594**	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.006	.008	.283	.003		.000	.000	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.7 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Coping with the travelling to university	Correlation Coefficient	-.224	.119	.301*	.284*	-.116	.361**	.581**	1.000	.308*	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.107	.029	.039	.407	.008	.000		.025	
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	
	49.8 For the following statements, think about how you feel about starting this postgraduate course. Coping with balancing life demands and study	Correlation Coefficient	-.385**	.403**	.337*	.421**	.438**	.101	.594**	.308*	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.004	.014	.002	.001	.473	.000	.025		
		N	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	53	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix 2 – variables q.46 with q.67

		Correlations																			
		q.1	q.2	q.3	q.4	q.5	q.6	q.7	q.8	q.9	q.10	q.11	q.12	q.13	q.14	q.15	q.16	q.17	q.18	q.19	q.20
q.46	q.46	1.000																			
	q.67	0.21	1.000																		
q.47	q.47	0.18	0.18	1.000																	
	q.67	0.15	0.15	0.15	1.000																
q.48	q.48	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	1.000															
	q.67	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	1.000														
q.49	q.49	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	1.000													
	q.67	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	1.000												
q.50	q.50	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	0.10	1.000											
	q.67	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	1.000										
q.51	q.51	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	1.000									
	q.67	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	1.000								
q.52	q.52	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	1.000							
	q.67	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	1.000						
q.53	q.53	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	1.000					
	q.67	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	1.000				
q.54	q.54	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	1.000			
	q.67	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	1.000		
q.55	q.55	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	1.000	
	q.67	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	1.000
q.56	q.56	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.57	q.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.58	q.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.59	q.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.60	q.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.61	q.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.62	q.62	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.63	q.63	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.64	q.64	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.65	q.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
q.66	q.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	q.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

1. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

2. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

<sup>a</sup> Number of subjects with a score of 0 on the scale.

## References

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*. Available from: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32409/11-944-higher-education-students-at-heart-of-system.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32409/11-944-higher-education-students-at-heart-of-system.pdf) (Accessed 8 July 2013).

Green, H. (2005) What has happened to postgraduate taught (PGT)? *News*, UK Council for Graduate Education. February, p.48.

Hatt, S., Baxter, A. and Tate, J. (2005) Who benefits from widening participation? A study of targeting in the South West of England. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. 29 (4), 341-51.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2013a) Table 1 - All students by HE institution, level of study, mode of study and domicile 2011/12. Online. Available at: <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1973/239/> (Accessed 23 February 2013).

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2013b) Students by subject of study, first year indicator, mode of study and level of study 2011/12. Online. Available at: <http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/1973/239/> (Accessed 23 February 2013).

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2015). General student numbers. Online. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/free-statistics> (Accessed 23 July 2015).

Higher Education Statistics Agency (2015) Student Introduction 2013/14. Online. Available at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/3484/#sex> (Accessed 23 July 2015).

Higher Education Commission (2012) *Postgraduate Education - An Independent Inquiry by the Higher Education Commission*, London: HEC.

Machin, S. and Murphy, R. (2010) *The social composition and future earnings of postgraduates*, London: Sutton.

Millward, C. And Creasey, E. (2013) Understanding and Stimulating the Taught Postgraduate Economy, Paper presented at UKCGE Annual Conference, 'Master Class: the changing face of PGT in a research-intensive environment', Birmingham, 1-2 July.

Morgan, M (2011) *Improving the student experience - a practical guide for Universities and colleges*, Oxon: Routledge.



Morgan, M. and Jones, J. (2013) Improving the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience: why understanding the expectations and attitudes towards study of your student body is so important , Paper presented at *NEON Summer Symposium*, Bedford University, Bedford, 20-21 June.

Morgan, M. (2013a) Where has Postgraduate Study Grown and What are the implications for the UK? An International Comparative Analysis, Paper presented at UKCGE Annual Conference, '*Master Class: the changing face of PGT in a research-intensive environment*', Birmingham, 1-2 July.

Morgan, M. (2013b) *Understanding prior feedback experiences of new postgraduate taught (PGT) STEM students' and their expectations and attitudes towards PGT level study at a 1992 institution -Higher Education Academy Individual Grant*, York: Higher Education Academy.

Office for National Statistics, 2012. Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales 2011. Online. Available at: [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_290558.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_290558.pdf) (Accessed 23 July 2015).

Stuart, M., Lido, C., Morgan, M., Solomon, L. and Akroyd, K. (2008) *Widening participation to postgraduate study: decisions, deterrents and creating success*, York: Higher Education Academy.

The Complete University Guide, 2015. University of Lincoln. Online. Available at: <http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/lincoln>

Thomas, L. (2002) Student retention in higher education: The role of institutional habitus. *Journal of Education Policy*. 17(4), 423-442.

Tinto, V. (1988) Stages of Student Departure: Reflection on the Longitudinal Character of Student Leaving. *Journal of Higher Education*. 59 (4), 438-55.

Tobbell, J., O'Donnell, V. and Zammit, M. (2008) *Exploring practice and participation in transition to postgraduate social science study*, York: Higher Education Academy.

Wakeling, P., (2005) La noblesse d'état anglaise? Social class and progression to postgraduate study. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 26 (4), 505-22.

Wakeling, P. and Hampden-Thompson, G. (2013) *Transition to higher degrees across the UK: an analysis of national, institutional and individual differences*, York: Higher Education Academy.

Woodrow, M. (1998) *From Elitism to Inclusion: Good Practice in Widening Participation in Higher Education*, London: CVCP.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank a number of colleagues who have assisted PEP at the University of Lincoln:

- The Institutional Working Group - Claire Mann, Kelly Sisson and Karin Crawford
- The Institutional Steering Group - chaired by Prof. Mary Stuart
- Alison Wilson and Vicky Naylor
- Daniel Curtis
- PGT STEM programme leaders, staff and administrators
- Staff across the University who have assisted with rolling out the scholarships.

Our thanks to Michelle Morgan (project leader) and Ines Direito (lead researcher) at Kingston University for their sound leadership and support and all the other PEP Institutional Researchers and Key Links.

Finally, a big thank you to all the PEP scholarship students for engaging with us and to all the other survey and focus group students at the University of Lincoln for their participation.

Rachel Spacey, School of Education

23.11.2015





UNIVERSITY OF  
**LINCOLN**

University of Lincoln  
Brayford Pool  
Lincoln  
LN6 7TS

Telephone: +44 (0)1522 886644  
Fax: +44 (0)1522 886974  
Email: [enquiries@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@lincoln.ac.uk)  
[www.lincoln.ac.uk](http://www.lincoln.ac.uk)